UNARRESTED DEVELOPMENT: A FRAMEWORK FOR YOUNG ADULT DISCIPLESHIP

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A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
May 2026

United Theological Seminary
Dayton, OH

Faculty Approval Page
Doctor of Ministry Final Project

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ABSTRACT

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This project explored how intentional leadership training can equip ministry leaders at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church to disciple young adults more effectively. Through a seven-week program integrating biblical, theological, historical, and interdisciplinary foundations, participants engaged in teaching sessions, journaling, and reflection. Data collected from surveys, interviews, and discussions revealed some cognitive, affective, and behavioral growth among leaders. Participants demonstrated increased confidence, clarity, and readiness to establish a sustainable young adult discipleship ministry. The project confirmed that transformational leadership principles combined with spiritual

formation can create a lasting impact, revitalizing discipleship practices and empowering leaders for ongoing ministry.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I give glory to God, whose wisdom and grace have kept me and sustained this project from conception to completion. Every insight, every breakthrough, and every moment of perseverance is a testimony to God's faithfulness and calling. Without God's guidance, none of this would have been possible.

I extend my deepest gratitude to the leadership and members of Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, and, most especially, to my context associates, Ms. Lester Richardson, Ms. Erica Smith, and Sis. Andrea Cross for embracing the vision of this project and allowing me to lead this journey. To the ministry leaders who volunteered as participants, your openness, commitment, and honesty made this work meaningful. You modeled the kind of faith, humility, and courage that make discipleship come alive in real and powerful ways.

To my professional associates, The Rev. Dr. David Scott Cunningham, The Rev. Dr. Dairl Scott Jr., and The Rev. Dr. Bryle Henderson-Hatch, thank you for your support, encouragement, and example of excellence in ministry. Your shared wisdom and counsel have been instrumental in helping me navigate this academic and spiritual journey. Each of you has modeled the kind of faith-driven leadership and collegial mentorship that strengthens both ministers and ministries.

To my faculty mentors and academic advisors at United Theological Seminary, The Rev. Dr. Phillip L. Pointer, Sr., the Rev. Dr. Danielle L. Brown, and the Rev. Dr.

Charles E. Goodman, Jr., thank you for guiding me with wisdom, insight, and patience. Your instruction and feedback challenged me to think critically, lead with integrity, and pursue excellence in ministry and scholarship. I am especially grateful for the experience and exposure to the work of ministry that you all cultivated, which have broadened my vision and expanded my knowledge as I seek to apply what I have gained in my context.

To my Doctor of Ministry cohort, PBG Class of 2026, your partnership has been invaluable. The collaboration, encouragement, and shared learning within our group reminded me that ministry is best done in community. Your feedback and dialogue helped sharpen my ideas and sustain my enthusiasm throughout this process. I wish we could have completed this journey with our brother, the late Rev. Derrick T. Jones, at our side, but God had other plans. I pray that our efforts will effectively honor his legacy. We are all the better for having gained him as a beloved brother.

To my family and friends, your love and understanding have been invaluable. You offered strength when I was weary and encouragement when the work felt heavy. I especially thank my wife, Shyla Monique Hairston, whose unwavering support and patience carried me through every late night and long writing session. You have been my greatest cheerleader, confidant, and partner in ministry. Your belief in this calling and in me has been both humbling and sustaining. This project is as much yours as it is mine, and I thank God daily for your love and faithfulness.

Finally, to everyone who encouraged, prayed, participated, or believed in this vision, thank you. May the fruit of this labor continue to bless Daniel Chapel, the A.M.E. Zion Church, and all who seek to disciple and be discipled for generations to come.

DEDICATION

This project is lovingly dedicated to my parents, Craig Hairston and Sylvia Hicks, whose sacrifices, faith, and unwavering support made it possible for me to pursue my education and calling. You have been my foundation and my inspiration.

To my bishop, mentor, pastor, brother, and friend, The Right Reverend Dr. Daran H. Mitchell, thank you for pushing me beyond limits and guiding me from my Master of Divinity through the Doctor of Ministry with vision and faith.

And to my spiritual father, brother, and friend, The Reverend Javan J. Leach, your encouragement, wisdom, and steadfast support have strengthened me in both ministry and life.

Each of you has poured into my journey in ways words cannot capture. This work reflects your love, leadership, and belief in me.

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INTRODUCTION

As pastor of Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in Phoenix, Illinois, I have witnessed both the beauty and the burden of serving a congregation rich in history yet confronted with the realities of a changing generation. The church I serve stands as a testimony of faith, perseverance, and legacy; one built by those who sacrificed much to establish a foundation of Christian witness in their community. Yet, like many historic congregations, Daniel Chapel now faces a critical challenge: the growing disconnection of young adults from the life and ministry of the church.

This project was birthed from that tension between reverence for tradition and the urgent call to relevance. The problem at Daniel Chapel was clear: our ministry context was not currently discipling its young adults. There were moments of engagement, young adults serving on occasional committees or attending special events, but there was no sustained, intentional process for spiritual formation. As I reflected on this, both as a pastor and as a young adult, I realized that this was not merely a local concern; it was symptomatic of a broader crisis. Churches across denominations are grappling with how to retain, reach, and raise the next generation of believers.

The central hypothesis guiding this project was: If ministry leaders participate in a training about discipling young adults, then they will be equipped to begin creating a young adult ministry designed to disciple these individuals. This hypothesis shaped every element of the project, from its theological framework to its practical implementation.

The project theme, therefore, centered on equipping leaders for sustainable young adult discipleship. It sought to move Daniel Chapel beyond sporadic programming toward intentional, relationship-driven formation.

This project also reflects my personal journey of ministry and leadership. Having served in the A.M.E. Zion Church for years, I have seen the transformative power of mentorship and discipleship in my own life. My ministry has been profoundly shaped by spiritual leaders who saw potential in me before I saw it in myself; men and women who modeled what it meant to walk with Christ in community. As I matured in ministry, I felt compelled to extend that same grace to others, particularly young adults who often stand at the crossroads of faith and identity.

Professionally, I have always viewed pastoral leadership not merely as preaching from the pulpit but as cultivating disciples in every pew. Yet, I began to recognize a troubling trend: while we had faithful members and effective programs, we lacked a systematic approach to discipling young adults. They were present but unanchored, attending worship but disengaged from the deeper rhythms of spiritual growth. This realization stirred both pastoral concern and curiosity, leading me to develop this project as a practical response to a real congregational need.

Daniel Chapel's context provided both the challenge and the opportunity for this project. Our congregation reflects a multigenerational makeup, with deep roots in the Phoenix and greater Chicago area. The older generations are committed and faithful, but there has been a noticeable decline in consistent young adult participation. Some of this can be attributed to cultural and societal shifts. Young adults are busier, more mobile, and often skeptical of institutions such as the church. Yet, the more pressing issue lay in that

we had not yet equipped our leaders with the tools to engage and disciple this demographic intentionally.

The goal, therefore, was not to create a "young adult program" but to establish a discipleship culture that naturally integrates young adults into the life of the church. I wanted our ministry leaders to understand that discipling young adults requires both theological depth and relational authenticity. It demands an approach that respects their questions, embraces their experiences, and connects their faith to real-world challenges.

The foundation of this project was built upon four pillars of doctoral formation: biblical, theological, historical, and interdisciplinary study. Each of these disciplines contributed uniquely to the design and purpose of the project. Biblically, Chapter Two, the project was grounded in Mark 3:13-19, where Jesus called, formed, and sent His disciples. This passage provided the blueprint for leadership development by showing that discipleship is not an event, but a process rooted in relationship, community, and mission. Theologically, Chapter Four, the project drew from the concept of missio Dei, the mission of God, in which the Church participates. The purpose of discipleship is not merely personal growth but participation in God's redemptive work in the world. Historically, Chapter Three, the Wesleyan model of discipleship, served as a touchstone. John Wesley's method of small groups, class meetings, and lay empowerment demonstrated that structured accountability and relational discipleship are essential for lasting transformation. Chapter Five, the project incorporated interdisciplinary insights from transformational leadership theory and developmental psychology. These frameworks helped illuminate how adults grow spiritually and emotionally, emphasizing the need for ministry leaders to nurture not just knowledge but character and community.

This integration ensured that the project was not only spiritually meaningful but also intellectually robust. It was designed to reflect the intersection of pastoral practice and academic discipline.

To test the hypothesis, in Chapter Six, I implemented a seven-week leadership training series that guided ministry leaders through the biblical, theological, historical, and psychological foundations of discipleship. Each week built upon the last, combining teaching, reflection, discussion, and practical application. Participants completed pre- and post-surveys, kept weekly journals, engaged in group discussions, and participated in one-on-one interviews. This mixed-method approach allowed for both qualitative and quantitative data collection, providing a holistic view of participant growth.

The participants, selected ministry leaders from Daniel Chapel, represented diverse backgrounds and roles within the church. They volunteered their time and energy, demonstrating a sincere desire to grow in their understanding of discipleship. Through the training, they developed a clearer grasp of how to engage young adults in meaningful ways and how to structure ministry around formation rather than activity.

The expected outcome of this project was twofold: first, to witness measurable growth in the participants' understanding and confidence in discipling young adults; and second, to lay the groundwork for an ongoing young adult discipleship ministry at Daniel Chapel. Beyond immediate outcomes, the broader hope was to influence the culture of the congregation to inspire a shift from maintenance to mission, from attendance to engagement, and from programmatic ministry to personal transformation.

In a time when the Church risks losing its connection to younger generations, this project represents a step toward renewal. It embodies the conviction that discipleship,

when practiced with intentionality and rooted in relational leadership, can bridge generational divides and restore vitality to the local church. Ultimately, this project is the culmination of both my academic journey and my pastoral calling. It reflects my belief that leadership development and discipleship are inseparable, and that by investing in leaders who disciple others, the Church fulfills its divine mandate to make disciples of all nations, including those within our own walls.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

For much of its existence, the church has been revered as the cornerstone of the community upon which life is centered. Additionally, the church has long been regarded as a safe space. The church can be considered a safe space for various reasons.

The church has historically emphasized the significance of community and fellowship. In a safe church environment, individuals find support, encouragement, and a sense of belonging. This was especially crucial during difficult times, such as illness, loss, or personal struggles. The church has also prioritized the confidentiality and privacy of its members. This has fostered a secure space where individuals feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, feelings, and personal experiences without fear of judgment or betrayal. Spiritual guidance and support have been vital elements used to create a safe environment. The church provides spiritual guidance and support, offering a setting for individuals to explore and deepen their faith. This can be seen as a secure space for those seeking spiritual growth, healing, and a sense of purpose. In situations where individuals have made mistakes or are grappling with specific issues, a safe church environment can offer accountability and a pathway toward restoration. This may involve pastoral counseling, mentorship, or support groups that provide guidance and help individuals navigate their challenges.

Commitment to justice and compassion are also critical components that are familiar as they relate to the church's identity as a safe space. Many churches have upheld a strong commitment to social justice and compassion. They have engaged in outreach programs, advocacy efforts, and community service projects to address systemic issues and help those in need. This commitment to justice has contributed to a perception of the church as a safe space, especially for marginalized individuals or those seeking help and support.

Many churches have been and continue to strive to be safe spaces. Unfortunately, not all churches live up to these ideals. Furthermore, regardless of what the church of today aspires to, how it is perceived by observers, both from outside and some from within, is that the church may not be as safe as they assumed or hoped it would be. The safety of a church is influenced by its leadership, culture, and practices, which can vary significantly from one church to another. However, cultivating a church culture that seeks to fulfill its mission as commissioned by Christ must prioritize creating a safe space for those it intends to support.

A careful and conscious evaluation of the Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church has led me to conclude that creating a safe space has not been a priority of its congregational culture for some time, as evidenced partially by its dwindling numbers post-pandemic. The purpose of this project is to affect the type of change within the congregation's consciousness that will elicit sensitivity to the needs of those they are called to serve, enhance awareness of the factors that impact both individual and collective senses of safety, and encourage intentionality towards embedding the cultivation of safe space in all protocols, policies, and procedures of the Ministry's work.

Context

The physical church is located on the corner of 153rd Street and Third Avenue, or Belle Court and Third Avenue, depending on your direction of travel. This community, in 2022, Phoenix, Illinois, had a population of 1.28k people with a median age of 52.5 and a median household income of $24,491. Between 2021 and 2022, the population of Phoenix, Illinois, declined from 1,314 to 1,278, a −2.74% decrease, and its median household income declined from $31,528 to $24,491, a −22.3% decrease.[1]

The fifth largest ethnic groups in Phoenix, Illinois are Black or African American (Non-Hispanic) (72.6%), White (Hispanic) (16.5%), Other (Hispanic) (4.54%), Other (Non-Hispanic) (2.97%), and Two+ (Non-Hispanic) (1.25%).[2] None of the households in Phoenix, Illinois, reported speaking a non-English language at home as their primary shared language. This does not consider the potential multilingual nature of households, but only the primary self-reported language spoken by all members of the household.

In 2022, the median property value in Phoenix, Illinois, quality of life for the residents of the Village of Phoenix focuses on capacity building for community-based grassroots organizations, stigma and harm reduction for marginalized populations, and trauma-informed care. The presence of such initiatives in this community serves not only to help those in need but also to inform those seeking to serve the community about where the needs are.

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[1] Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, “Community Data Snapshot: Phoenix,” CMAP, https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/Phoenix.pdf.

[2] Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, “Community Data Snapshot: Phoenix,” CMAP, https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/Phoenix.pdf.

The Village of Phoenix, Illinois, located on the south side of Chicago between Harvey and South Holland, has been predominantly a Black neighborhood since 1915. Daniel Chapel started its ministry in the home of two founding members who lived in the Phoenix community in 1938. Within five weeks of launching the ministry, they were able to purchase the current church building and property. Throughout its presence there, Daniel Chapel has maintained a positive reputation for conducting effective and relevant ministry. The primary focus has been on redefining its community around addressing the needs of hunger and financial assistance.

The demographics of my congregation are as follows. We have a congregation of approximately 127 people. Of that amount, 53% of those members range in age from fifty-six to ninety-four years old. Seventeen percent of the congregation ranges in age from forty to fifty-five years old. Sixteen percent of the congregation ranges in age from eighteen to thirty-nine years old. The remaining 14% of the congregation range in age from eight months to seventeen years old. Apart from some, most of the congregation live in or about the south side of Chicago, which means many of them are not included in the statistics listed above. As a result, the congregation's connection to the Phoenix, Illinois, community is primarily through the church. Furthermore, their reliance on the church is greatly tied to their ability to attend worship services and engage in the various activities organized by different auxiliaries. Shortly after my arrival, we began broadcasting one service each Sunday, which is streamed to Facebook and YouTube, and is also accessible via Zoom and teleconference. Before my arrival and during the pandemic, Daniel Chapel held two services: one at 8:00 a.m. and another at 11:00 a.m. Due to safety protocols related to the pandemic, both services were conducted entirely

online until 2021. After the church building reopened, attendance decreased significantly, prompting the congregation to discontinue the 8:00 a.m. service to optimize the church's resources.

Ministry Journey

I currently pastor a church that, according to the description, would fall under the category of a shepherding-sized congregation, typically ranging from fifty to 150 members.[3] This classification is not merely numerical; it reflects a particular leadership dependency and relational pattern within the life of the congregation. Shepherding-sized churches often rely heavily upon the pastor for vision, coordination, and decision-making. Unlike family-sized congregations, where authority is embedded within kinship networks and longstanding familial ties, shepherding congregations depend more directly upon pastoral direction while still maintaining strong informal power structures among key members. Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church reflects many of these dynamics in both subtle and visible ways.

While the church's membership size situates it clearly within the shepherding range, the more defining feature of its current context is demographic imbalance. The congregation is primarily composed of older adults who have sustained the ministry for decades through sacrificial giving, consistent attendance, and unwavering loyalty. Their commitment is remarkable and deserves recognition. Many have weathered seasons of financial strain, leadership transitions, denominational shifts, and community decline.

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[3] Israel Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations: Discerning Church Dynamics* (Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2004), 39.

However, what is increasingly evident is the noticeable absence of young adults within the life of the church. This absence is not simply a matter of attendance patterns; it is a structural reality that shapes worship expression, ministry priorities, leadership pipelines, theological imagination, and long-term sustainability.

Galindo suggests that this is characteristic of shepherding-sized churches. Members appreciate that they are just small enough for everyone to know one another, and they usually prefer to keep it that way.[4] At Daniel Chapel, this dynamic is present and deeply embedded within the congregational culture. Certain members possess institutional memory that informs both decision-making and resistance to change. Their influence is respected and often deferred to by the congregation. While this transactive memory, "knowing others well enough to know what they know and to trust them to know things for us", creates efficiency, cohesion, and relational stability, it can also limit adaptation.[5] New ideas, particularly those that require shifts in tradition, power redistribution, or generational inclusion, are often filtered through established relational networks before being embraced.

This dynamic becomes especially consequential when considering young adult engagement. Shepherding congregations value familiarity and stability. Members often take comfort in knowing everyone in the room and in maintaining predictable rhythms of worship and governance. The intimacy that fosters belonging for longtime members can unintentionally create barriers for those who are new or younger. The introduction of

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[4] Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations,* 41.

[5] Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations,* 44.

younger adults, whose expectations about worship style, communication methods, leadership participation, and theological exploration may differ from established norms, can feel destabilizing. Without intentional strategies to bridge generational differences, the church can subtly reinforce patterns that prioritize continuity over innovation and comfort over transformation.

The 150-member tipping point Galindo references is also instructive.[6] Daniel Chapel has hovered near this threshold for decades without surpassing it. Even during seasons when multiple individuals joined the church, overall membership did not consistently exceed that number. Initially, such fluctuation might appear natural, reflecting routine life transitions. However, upon closer reflection, it reveals a deeper pattern of generational attrition. As older members age, relocate, or pass away, there has not been a consistent influx or retention of young adults to sustain long-term vitality. Growth, therefore, is offset by loss, resulting in stagnation that masks itself as stability.

This generational imbalance raises significant ecclesiological questions. A congregation cannot rely completely upon the faithfulness of aging members without cultivating emerging leaders who are prepared to carry the ministry forward. The absence of a structured discipleship pathway for young adults has contributed to a widening leadership gap. Youth participation may exist during adolescence through seasonal programming or special events, but the transition from youth ministry to adult leadership remains undefined and underdeveloped. Individuals in their twenties and thirties often find themselves spiritually unanchored, no longer fitting within youth categories yet not fully integrated into established adult circles. Without intentional mentorship, leadership

[6] Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations,* 39.

apprenticeship, theological formation, and relational integration, they drift to other communities that provide clearer identity, deeper belonging, and more tangible purpose.

Galindo's exploration of spirituality styles offers additional insight into this dynamic. He identifies cognitive, affective, pilgrim, mystic, servant, and crusader orientations, emphasizing that spirituality is shaped more by how one believes than by what one believes. [7] Daniel Chapel exhibits a pronounced servant orientation. The church has cultivated a reputation within the Village of Phoenix, Illinois, for community engagement and outreach. Food distribution initiatives, civic involvement, neighborhood partnerships, and public service activities demonstrate tangible commitment to serving immediate needs. Given the socioeconomic realities of Phoenix, marked by population decline, economic instability, and limited local opportunity, this servant identity aligns meaningfully with community need.

However, service alone does not guarantee generational continuity. Younger generations often seek integrated formation that combine mission, community, theological depth, relational belonging, and vocational discernment. Service without sustained discipleship can produce sporadic engagement rather than lifelong attachment. For young adults navigating vocational uncertainty, relational transitions, social fragmentation, and spiritual questions, the church must offer more than opportunity to volunteer. It must provide relational development that supports identity formation within a community of faith and a clear pathway toward meaningful leadership participation.

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[7] Galindo, *The Hidden Lives of Congregations,* 62.

My transition to Daniel Chapel followed four and a half years of pastoral service at York Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church in Greenville, North Carolina, under the leadership of the Rt. Rev. Kenneth Monroe. Serving within the North Carolina Conference afforded me familiarity with regional culture, denominational patterns, and longstanding relationships. I understood the unspoken expectations of conference life and the relational nuances that shape ministry within that context. My appointment to Daniel Chapel by the Rt. Rev. Daran H. Mitchell required adaptation to a new Episcopal Area encompassing the Midwest. Though I had traveled and engaged broadly within the connectional church, this appointment required immersion into a context shaped by different demographic realities and historical trajectories.

Upon arrival, I encountered a congregation navigating generational transition with both pride and uncertainty. Conversations with senior members revealed deep appreciation for the church's historical significance and communal contributions. Stories of past revivals, strong choirs, vibrant youth participation, and denominational leadership were shared with reverence. Yet woven within these narratives was quiet concern about the future. References to "our young people" frequently described individuals who were no longer young. Leadership meetings rarely included voices under the age of forty. The demographic gap was not incidental; it was cumulative, the result of years of insufficient retention and inadequate formation strategies.

Conducting an initial spiritual, operational, and physical assessment clarified this reality. Ministries were structured primarily around the needs and rhythms of older adults. Decision-making bodies reflected similar age distributions. Programming

priorities mirrored established preferences and historical patterns. While such continuity preserved stability, it also limited experimentation and inhibited change. The question before us was not whether the church valued young adults but whether it had cultivated systems capable of forming, empowering, and retaining them.

Emotionally, this realization was sobering. I felt the weight of shepherding a faithful congregation whose longevity depended upon change it seemed hesitant to embrace. There were moments of internal tension as I wrestled with honoring legacy while pursuing transformation. I questioned how to introduce structural shifts without alienating those who had carried the ministry for decades. I recognized that change imposed without relational groundwork would be resisted, and rightly so. Therefore, listening became my first discipline and primary leadership strategy.

Through extended conversations, informal gatherings, pastoral visits, and careful observation, I began to discern both anxiety and openness. Many members acknowledged the absence of younger generations. Some expressed sadness at watching grandchildren grow up without sustained church involvement. Others admitted uncertainty about how to connect with emerging adults whose experiences, educational backgrounds, and cultural references differed dramatically from their own. Beneath resistance to change was often fear of losing identity, fear of irrelevance, fear of relinquishing control, and fear that the church they loved might not survive generational transition.

Peter Ward's assertion that "Faith is communal and embodied" became increasingly relevant within this context.[8] Spiritual formation is not transmitted through instruction alone; it is cultivated through shared life, visible models, and participatory belonging. Entering Daniel Chapel required me to embody presence before proposing programs. I needed to inhabit the rhythms of the congregation, honor its saints, participate in its service commitments, and demonstrate respect for its history. Only through relational credibility could I begin to articulate a vision for generational renewal that would be received rather than resisted.

The broader context of Phoenix, Illinois, intensifies this challenge. The community has experienced population decline and economic shifts that affect institutional sustainability and family stability. Younger families often relocate for employment opportunities, educational advancement, or housing accessibility. Schools consolidate and community organizations diminish. In such an environment, the church has contended not only with internal generational imbalance but also with external demographic contraction. Ministry, therefore, requires contextual awareness, theological imagination, and adaptive leadership.

The intersection of these realities, shepherding-sized structure, servant spirituality, generational attrition, community decline, and leadership dependency, forms the challenge of my ministry journey at Daniel Chapel. The central crisis is not merely attendance fluctuation but the absence of intentional young adult discipleship. Without

[8] Pete Ward, *Introducing Practical Theology: Mission, Ministry, and the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 13.

deliberate cultivation of emerging leaders, the church risks becoming a museum of memory rather than a movement of mission. Legacy alone cannot secure longevity.

Yet within this challenge lies profound opportunity. The servant heart of the congregation provides fertile soil for transformation. Members already understand sacrifice, loyalty, and communal responsibility. What remains is to align that servant identity with structured formation. Developing mentoring relationships, small group environments, leadership apprenticeships, theological dialogue spaces, and intergenerational partnerships can bridge demographic divides. Such efforts require patience, persistence, theological clarity, and shared ownership rather than unilateral directive.

This ministry journey has reshaped my understanding of pastoral leadership and church renewal. Revitalization is not accomplished through charismatic innovation alone. It emerges through sustained relational investment, theological depth, institutional courage, and spiritual discernment. The Spirit of Christ is most clearly embodied when generations walk together, when elders bless emerging leaders and, young adults contribute vision, creativity, and energy to the shared mission.

Daniel Chapel stands at a crossroads defined not by crisis alone but by possibility. Its history testifies to resilience and devotion. Its present reveals imbalance and vulnerability. Its future depends upon whether it can transform faithful service into a discipling culture that intentionally includes those who are currently absent from its pews but essential to its tomorrow. My calling within this context is to facilitate that transformation, not by discarding legacy, but by extending it. The story of Daniel Chapel

is still unfolding, and its next chapter will be written through intentional engagement with young adults whose formation will determine whether the church remains a living witness rather than a fading memory.

Conclusion

This exploration has sought to examine the nature of the church as a formative community and to investigate what it means for a congregation to embody faith across generations within a shifting social landscape. At the heart of this work lies a theological conviction: the church does not exist merely to preserve inherited traditions, nor simply to maintain institutional continuity, but to participate faithfully in the ongoing formation of disciples who live and witness within their historical moment. The question that has guided this project is not whether the church can survive cultural change, but whether it can remain obedient to its calling within it.

The examination of Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church has revealed a tension that is both contextual and theological. Contextually, the congregation resides within a community shaped by economic instability, population decline, and limited upward mobility for younger generations. Theologically, the congregation professes a faith rooted in connectional heritage, service, and communal belonging. The tension arises when the structures that once sustained discipleship no longer adequately form emerging generations. This is not a crisis of belief, but a crisis of adapting to change. The faith has

not disappeared; the pathways through which it is embodied and handed forward have weakened.

The church has historically understood itself as a sanctuary; a place of refuge, worship, and moral orientation. Yet sanctuary alone does not guarantee continuity. A congregation may provide safety without providing structure. It may preserve doctrine without cultivating depth. It may honor tradition without equipping successors. The work of this project has demonstrated that intentional discipleship is not an optional enhancement to congregational life; it is part of the church's identity. Without structured formation, faith becomes episodic rather than enduring.

One of the central theological insights emerging from this project is that discipleship must be understood as intergenerational stewardship. The gospel is entrusted to communities, not isolated individuals. Each generation receives it, embodies it, and is responsible for transmitting it faithfully. When that transmission becomes passive or assumed rather than intentional, the church experiences quiet erosion rather than dramatic collapse. Decline does not occur only through opposition; it can also occur through lack of attention.

Daniel Chapel's history demonstrates resilience and devotion. Its members have carried the church through seasons of challenge with sacrificial commitment. This resilience, however, must now be paired with recalibration. The structures that supported previous decades of ministry were effective within their context. The present moment demands adaptation, not abandonment. The church's theological commitments remain sound; its discipleship mechanisms require renewal.

This project has underscored that structural resistance to change is often mistaken for faithfulness. Congregations sometimes equate longevity with effectiveness. Yet endurance and fruitfulness are not synonymous. Faithfulness includes the courage to evaluate whether systems continue to serve the mission. To question structure is not to question theology; it is to seek alignment between belief and practice. In this sense, renewal is an act of fidelity rather than rebellion.

The absence of sustained young adult participation must therefore be interpreted not as moral failure on the part of emerging generations, but as diagnostic information. It signals a misalignment between congregational structure and developmental need. Younger adults often navigate fragmented social networks, economic uncertainty, and the lack of vocational clarity. They seek communities that offer authenticity, intellectual engagement, relational depth, and tangible purpose. When churches provide only partial engagement, such as occasional service opportunities or surface-level inclusion, emerging adults may respect the institution yet remain unformed by it.

Theologically, this misalignment invites reflection on the church's understanding of embodiment. Faith is not primarily comprehension, but lived participation in a community shaped by Christ. If participation remains limited or undefined, embodiment becomes thin. Discipleship must therefore be relationally dense. It must involve shared rhythms, honest dialogue, mutual accountability, and visible models of spiritual maturity. Without such density, belonging remains superficial.

Leadership implications flow directly from this insight. Pastoral leadership within such contexts requires interpretive skill. The pastor must discern patterns beneath surface

symptoms, translating demographic trends into theological questions. It also requires emotional steadiness. Conversations about generational imbalance can evoke defensiveness, nostalgia, or anxiety. Guiding a congregation through such reflection demands patience and clarity, resisting both alarmism and complacency.

Equally important is distributed leadership. Sustainable renewal cannot rest solely upon pastoral initiative. The congregation must assume collective responsibility for formation. Older members must perceive themselves not merely as beneficiaries of ministry but as mentors and witnesses. Younger adults must be invited not simply to attend but to contribute meaningfully. Renewal becomes sustainable when ownership is shared.

The broader community context also shapes the future trajectory of Daniel Chapel. Economic instability and population mobility are structural realities beyond the church's control. However, these realities do not render discipleship impossible. Instead, they intensify the necessity of clarity. In transient environments, formation must be deliberate. If young adults relocate, they should leave not as passive attendees but as formed disciples capable of embodying faith elsewhere. The success of discipleship is not measured only by retention, but by reproduction.

This distinction reframes the narrative of decline. Rather than measuring vitality solely by local growth metrics, the church may evaluate its faithfulness by its capacity to send formed believers into other contexts. Such an understanding reorients anxiety into mission. The question becomes not, "How do we keep everyone?" but "How do we form

them well while they are with us?" This shift does not negate the desire for local sustainability; it situates it within a broader theological horizon.

Another lesson emerging from this journey concerns the connection between memory and imagination. Daniel Chapel's history is rich with stories of impact and influence. These narratives must not be discarded. However, memory must serve imagination rather than replace it. When stories of past vitality become substitutes for present engagement, they function as consolation rather than inspiration. Healthy memory cultivates innovation; unhealthy memory resists it.

The work ahead, therefore, involves cultivating theological imagination. The congregation must envision itself not only as guardian of tradition but as incubator of emerging leadership. This requires practical shifts: creating structured mentoring relationships, normalizing theological dialogue across generations, embedding leadership development within ministry practice, and articulating clear expectations for spiritual growth. These are not simply cosmetic adjustments.

Hope remains central to this conclusion. The challenges identified are significant but not insurmountable. Daniel Chapel possesses assets that cannot be manufactured: deep relational bonds, denominational rootedness, and demonstrated commitment to service. These assets provide a foundation upon which renewed discipleship structures can be built. Renewal does not require reinventing identity. It requires realigning practice with conviction.

Ultimately, this project affirms that the vitality of a congregation is measured not by how effectively it preserves its past, but by how faithfully it prepares its future. The church exists within time, yet participates in an eternal mission. Each generation must receive, reinterpret, and re-embody the gospel within its context. When that process becomes intentional, the church thrives even amid demographic uncertainty. When it becomes assumed, decline accelerates quietly.

The conclusion of this chapter is therefore not an ending, but a threshold. Daniel Chapel stands at a moment that demands theological clarity, structural courage, and relational generosity. The future will be shaped by decisions made about mentorship, leadership inclusion, resource allocation, and communal expectation. Comfort may offer short-term stability; courage offers long-term fruitfulness.

If the congregation embraces intentional discipleship as its defining priority, it will not merely endure generational transition; it will transform through it. It will model what it means to be a community that learns, adapts, and remains rooted in Christ while engaging contemporary reality. In doing so, it will demonstrate that faithfulness is not static preservation but dynamic participation in God's redemptive work.

Moving forward, the message is clear: the church must remain dedicated to being a safe, welcoming space for everyone. It should be a place where individuals can experience the love and grace of God, finding healing, hope, and restoration. It ought to be a setting where justice is pursued, compassion is demonstrated, and lives are transformed. The work of ministry is never easy, but it is always worthwhile. With faith,

resilience, and a strong commitment to the church's mission, we will continue to grow, serve, and make a difference in the lives of those we are called to support

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The passage Mark 3:13-19 is a pivotal moment in the Gospel of Mark, highlighting the formal appointment of the twelve Apostles by Jesus. This event signifies a critical juncture in Jesus' ministry as it marks the establishment of a group that would become foundational to the Christian Church. The selection of these twelve men is not only significant for their immediate roles but also symbolically rich, reflecting deeper theological and ecclesiastical themes.

Historical and Literary Context

Historical Context

The Gospel of Mark is widely considered the earliest of the four canonical Gospels, written around 65-70 CE.[1] Understanding the context of Mark's writing is essential for grasping its themes and messages.[2] Composed during a period of political turmoil and persecution for Christians, Mark's Gospel emphasizes the suffering and servanthood of Jesus, resonating with the experiences of its original audience.[3] The

[1] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 25-27.

[2] M. Eugene Boring, *Mark: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 112-114.

[3] James A. Brooks, *Mark* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1991), 95-97.

destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE by the Romans may have shaped the themes of crisis and hope in Mark's narrative.[4] This context illustrates a community in distress, seeking reassurance in the promised return of Christ and the establishment of God's kingdom.

Literary Context

The passage Mark 3:13-19 is situated within the broader narrative of Jesus' early ministry in Galilee. Before this passage, Jesus is portrayed as healing and casting out demons, drawing large crowds and encountering opposition from religious authorities (Mk. 3:13-19). This section emphasizes Jesus' rising popularity and the increasing conflict with established religious leaders.[5] The tension between Jesus and the Pharisees, a recurring theme in Mark, highlights the revolutionary nature of Jesus' ministry and its challenge to the religious status quo.[6]

The structure of Mark's Gospel is marked by a rapid, almost urgent pace, frequently using the word "immediately" (Greek: euthys) to connect events.[7] This stylistic choice emphasizes the swift and decisive actions of Jesus, highlighting the urgency of his mission.[8] Mark 3:13-19 signifies a crucial transition from Jesus' individual

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[4] William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 124-125.

[5] Brendan Byrne, *A Costly Freedom: A Theological Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 76-79.

[6] Ben Witherington, III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 147-148.

[7] James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 109-110.

[8] John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 134-136.

ministry to a collective mission with his chosen Apostles, indicating a strategic expansion of his work.[9]

Text of Mark 3:13-19 (NRSV)

Mark 3:13-19 states:

> He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons. So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.[10]

Exegesis of the Passage

Verse: thirteen states, "He went up the mountain and called to those he wanted, and they came to him." In biblical tradition, mountains are often depicted as places of divine revelation and encounter with God. Moses received the Law on Mount Sinai, and Elijah encountered God on Mount Horeb.[11] The mountain is a recurring motif in the Bible, symbolizing a place where heaven and earth meet, where human beings encounter the divine. Jesus ascending the mountain signifies a moment of profound divine action and revelation. This setting prepares the reader for a momentous event, echoing the giving of the Law to Moses and the prophetic experiences of Elijah. It also contrasts with

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[9] Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (London, UK: A and C Black, 1991), 88-90.

[10] C. Clifton Black, *Mark* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 110-112.

[11] Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 274-275.

the flat plains and bustling towns where Jesus often taught, indicating a withdrawal for a special purpose.[12]

Jesus' calling of his disciples demonstrates his authority and initiative. The phrase "those whom he wanted" emphasizes Jesus' sovereign choice in selecting his Apostles. Their immediate response, "they came to him," reflects their willingness and readiness to follow him.[13] This choice underscores the idea of divine election, where Jesus selects individuals based on divine will rather than human merit. This calling also signifies a break from their previous lives, as they are invited into a new identity and mission. The responsiveness of the disciples is significant; it demonstrates their recognition of Jesus' authority and their willingness to be part of his transformative mission.

Verses fourteen and fifteen state, "And he appointed twelve, whom he also named Apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons." As Jesus appointed the twelve, we know that the number twelve is symbolically significant, representing the twelve tribes of Israel. By appointing twelve Apostles, Jesus is symbolically reconstituting Israel, establishing a new community of God's people.[14] This act of reconstitution underscores the continuity and fulfillment of God's promises to Israel while simultaneously inaugurating a new phase in God's redemptive plan. The Apostles are to serve as the foundation of this new community, analogous to the patriarchs of the twelve tribes. This symbolic action would

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[12] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 85-87.

[13] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 203-204.

[14] Donald A. Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 169-171.

have been profoundly meaningful to a Jewish audience, resonating with their expectations of a messianic renewal of Israel.

Role and Mission

The Apostles are given a dual role: to be with Jesus and to be sent out. “To be with him” signifies the importance of companionship and discipleship, highlighting the relational aspect of their calling.[15] “To be sent out to proclaim the message” and “to have authority to cast out demons” indicate their active mission to extend Jesus’ ministry, particularly in preaching and spiritual warfare.[16] The phrase “to be with him” underscores the significance of being in Jesus' presence and learning from him directly. This relational aspect of discipleship is foundational; it is from this intimate association with Jesus that their mission flows. Being “sent out” (Greek: ἀποστέλλω, apostellō) emphasizes their role as Apostles, or “sent ones,” who carry the authority and message of Jesus to the broader world.[17] The authority to cast out demons reflects Jesus' power over evil, which he delegates to his Apostles. This power is not just symbolic but serves as a practical demonstration of the inbreaking of God's kingdom, challenging the strongholds of darkness.

Verses Sixteen Through Nineteen: Naming of the Apostles – Simon (Peter)

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[15] Larry W. Hurtado, *Mark* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 64-66.

[16] Robert H. Stein, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 181-182.

[17] Stein, *Mark,* 183-184.

Peter is consistently listed first among the Apostles, highlighting his prominent role. The name Peter (Greek: Petros) translates to “rock,” signifying his foundational importance in the early church.[18] His leadership is further underscored in other Gospel accounts and in the Acts of the Apostles, where he often serves as a spokesperson for the group. Jesus' naming of him as “rock” (Cephas in Aramaic) carries great significance, as it denotes stability and foundational strength. This change of name reflects a transformation in his identity and mission, emphasizing the crucial role he will play in establishing the church.[19]

James and John (Boanerges)

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, receive the name Boanerges, meaning “Sons of Thunder.” This name likely reflects their zealous and fiery nature, as shown in other Gospel accounts (e.g., Luke 9:54).[20] The nickname “Sons of Thunder” suggests a passionate and forceful personality, evident in their request to call down fire from heaven upon a Samaritan village that rejected Jesus.[21] This fiery zeal, while sometimes needing guidance and correction, also indicates their fervent commitment to Jesus and his mission. Their close relationship with Jesus is highlighted by their inclusion in the inner circle of disciples who witness significant events, such as the Transfiguration.[22]

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[18] David E. Garland, *A Theology of Mark's Gospel: Good News about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 235-236.

[19] Garland, *A Theology of Mark’s Gospel,* 238-239.

[20] Hooker, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 104-106.

[21] N. T. Wright, *Mark for Everyone* (London, UK: SPCK, 2001), 37-39.

[22] Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Conflict in Mark: Jesus, Authorities, Disciples* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1989), 172-174; Hurtado, *Mark*, 64-66.

Andrew; Philip; Bartholomew; Matthew; Thomas; James, Son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananaean

These Apostles, although less prominently featured in the Gospels, each played a crucial role in the early church. Their inclusion underscores the diversity and inclusivity of Jesus' followers.[23] Andrew, Peter's brother, is often portrayed as someone who brings others to Jesus, demonstrating a relational and evangelistic role. Philip's interactions suggest a thoughtful and questioning nature, as he seeks to understand Jesus more deeply. Bartholomew (also identified as Nathanael) is noted for his honesty and initial skepticism about Jesus' origins, which evolves into a profound recognition of Jesus' identity.[24] Matthew, a former tax collector, exemplifies the transformative power of Jesus' call, turning from a life of collaboration with Rome to one of faithful discipleship. Thomas, known for his doubt, ultimately provides a powerful confession of faith. James, son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus (likely also called Judas son of James); and Simon the Cananaean are less well-known but represent the breadth of backgrounds among Jesus' followers.[25] Their various backgrounds and temperaments illustrate the inclusive and transformative nature of Jesus' call.[26]

Judas Iscariot

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[23] Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 85-87.

[24] Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 203-204.

[25] Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction,* 169-171.

[26] C. S. Mann, *Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1986), 211-213.

Judas is distinctly known as “the one who betrayed him.” This reference foreshadows the looming betrayal and emphasizes the theme of opposition and treachery that permeates the Gospel of Mark.[27] Judas' position among the twelve serves as a sobering reminder of the existence of betrayal and conflict even within the closest circles of Jesus' followers. His eventual betrayal, driven by unknown yet speculated motives like disillusionment or greed, plays a vital role in the development of the passion narrative.[28] The contrast between Judas' initial calling and his eventual betrayal highlights the themes of free will, responsibility, and the enigma of evil within the story.[29]

Theological Implications

Jesus' Authority and Initiative

The passage highlights Jesus’ authority in calling and commissioning his Apostles. This authority is divinely sanctioned, evident in his ability to appoint and empower others. It illustrates the divine initiative in establishing the church.[30] Jesus' actions showcase his sovereign power and purpose, as he not only calls but also equips his followers for their mission. This divine authority is a central theme in Mark's Gospel, where Jesus is portrayed as having authority over nature, illness, demons, and even death.[31] The calling of the Apostles further emphasizes that Jesus' authority is not limited

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[27] Stein, *Mark*, 181-182.

[28] Stein, *Mark,* 183-184.

[29] Francis J. Moloney, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 189-191.

[30] Garland, *A Theology of Mark's Gospel,* 235-236.

to himself but extends through those he commissions.[32] This delegation of authority reinforces the continuity of Jesus' mission through the Apostles and, by extension, through the church.

The Nature of Discipleship

The calling of the Apostles illustrates discipleship's nature as both relational and missional. Disciples are called to be in close relationship with Jesus ("to be with him") and to actively participate in his mission ("to be sent out"). This dual aspect of discipleship is central to Christian identity and vocation.[33] The relational aspect of being with Jesus highlights the significance of intimate knowledge and communion with him, which forms the foundation for effective ministry. The missional aspect emphasizes active participation in God's redemptive work, urging disciples to engage with the world through the message and power of the Gospel. This balance between being and doing is essential for understanding true discipleship, which involves transformation through a relationship with Jesus and engagement in his mission.

The Reconstitution of Israel

By appointing twelve Apostles, Jesus symbolically reconstitutes the people of Israel. This action signifies the inauguration of a new covenant community that is inclusive and diverse yet rooted in the continuity of God's redemptive plan.[34] This new

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[31] Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark's Story of Jesus* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 207-209.

[32] Garland, *A Theology of Mark's Gospel,* 238-239.

[33] Hooker, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 104-106.

[34] Wright, *Mark for Everyone*, 37-39.

community is not constrained by ethnic or cultural boundaries, but is open to all who respond to Jesus' call. The symbolic reconstitution of Israel points to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and promises, emphasizing Jesus as the Messiah who unites a renewed people of God. This action also indicates a departure from the old order, as Jesus establishes a community based on faith in Him rather than mere adherence to the old covenant.[35]

Mission and Authority

The Apostles are given authority to preach and cast out demons, reflecting the comprehensive nature of their mission. This authority symbolizes the empowerment of the church to continue Jesus' work, encompassing both proclamation and spiritual warfare.[36] The power to cast out demons emphasizes the reality of spiritual conflict and the church's role in confronting and overcoming evil. Preaching the message highlights the centrality of the Gospel in the church's mission, underscoring the importance of proclaiming Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as the foundation of Christian faith. This dual focus on proclamation and spiritual warfare illustrates the holistic nature of the church's mission, addressing both spiritual and physical needs.[37]

Foreshadowing of Betrayal

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[35] Pheme Perkins, *Mark* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 132-134.

[36] Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*, 85-87.

[37] David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 221-223.

The inclusion of Judas Iscariot, along with the note of his impending betrayal, introduces a theme of suffering and opposition. It serves as a reminder of the cost of discipleship and the reality of betrayal and conflict within the community of faith.[38] The presence of Judas among the twelve highlights the complexities and challenges of community life, where betrayal and conflict coexist with faithfulness and unity.[39] This foreshadowing also emphasizes that broader narrative of Jesus' passion, in which betrayal, suffering, and death are central themes. The mention of Judas' betrayal at this early stage in the Gospel underscores the inevitability and necessity of Jesus' sacrificial death for the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan.[40]

Through careful analysis of the historical and literary context, the roles and identities of the Apostles, and the theological implications, we gain a deeper understanding of the nature of discipleship, the authority of Jesus, and the mission of the church. This passage calls contemporary readers to reflect on their own calling, the importance of community, and the ongoing mission of proclaiming the Gospel and confronting spiritual evil. It challenges believers to embrace both the relational and missional aspects of discipleship, recognizing the divine authority and empowerment bestowed upon them. Additionally, it serves as a reminder of the inclusive and transformative nature of Jesus' call, transcending cultural and ethnic boundaries to establish a new covenant community rooted in faith and mission. Ultimately, this passage

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[38] Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, 203-204.

[39] Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996), 158-160.

[40] Hendrika Roskam, *The Purpose of the Gospel of Mark in Its Historical and Social Context* (Leiden, UK: Brill, 2004), 90-92.

encourages the church to continue the work of Jesus, proclaiming the Gospel and confronting the powers of darkness with the authority and power given by Christ.

Disciplining Young Adults in Contemporary Culture: Insights from Mark 3:13-19

The passage of Mark 3:13-19 provides a profound template for understanding and implementing discipleship, especially for young adults in contemporary culture. In this section, we will explore how the principles embedded in this passage can be applied to modern discipleship practices, addressing the unique challenges and opportunities presented by today's cultural landscape. By examining Jesus' approach to calling, equipping, and sending out his Apostles, we can draw valuable lessons for promoting spiritual growth, community engagement, and mission-oriented living among young adults.

The Call to Discipleship

In Mark 3:13, Jesus ascends the mountain and calls to himself those he chooses. This action signifies intention and purpose in selecting his disciples. For contemporary discipleship, this highlights the significance of intentional engagement with young adults. Today, many young people encounter a barrage of competing voices and influences from social media, entertainment, and secular ideologies. In this context, the church must actively and purposefully reach out to young adults, offering a clear and compelling invitation to follow Christ.

Intentionality involves creating spaces where young adults can personally encounter Jesus. This may include retreats, small group gatherings, or mentorship

programs that offer opportunities for deeper connection and spiritual exploration. The church's role is to facilitate these encounters, helping young adults discern and respond to Jesus' call in their lives. Just as Jesus called his disciples to him, the church must cultivate environments where young adults feel welcomed, valued, and encouraged to enter into a transformative relationship with Christ.[41]

Community and Belonging

Jesus' appointment of the twelve Apostles was not just an individual call but a call into a community. Mark 3:14 states that they were appointed "to be with him." This highlights the relational aspect of discipleship, emphasizing the importance of community and belonging.[42] For young adults in contemporary culture, this need for community is particularly acute. Many young people today experience loneliness and a lack of meaningful connections despite being constantly connected through digital platforms.[43]

The church can address this by fostering genuine, supportive communities where young adults can build deep, life-giving relationships. Small groups, discipleship classes, and fellowship events provide the essential context for these relationships to thrive. Additionally, intergenerational connections can be especially beneficial, allowing young

[41] France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 148.

[42] David E. Smith, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 175-177.

[43] Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 129.

adults to learn from the experiences and wisdom of older believers. By prioritizing community and relational discipleship, the church can cultivate a sense of belonging that counters the isolation and superficiality often found in contemporary culture.[44]

Equipping for Mission

In Mark 3:14-15, Jesus not only calls the Apostles to be with him but also to be sent out to preach and have authority to cast out demons. This dual aspect of being with Jesus and being sent out is crucial for understanding discipleship.[45] It emphasizes that true discipleship involves both spiritual formation and active engagement in mission. For young adults, this means being equipped not only with biblical knowledge and spiritual practices but also with the skills and confidence to live out their faith in the world.

In contemporary culture, young adults are often passionate about social justice, environmental issues, and community service. The church can harness this passion by providing opportunities for young adults to engage in mission-oriented activities that address these concerns. Service projects, mission trips, and advocacy initiatives can help young adults recognize the practical implications of their faith and empower them to create a positive impact in their communities and beyond. By equipping young adults for mission, the church assists them in integrating their faith with their daily lives and broader societal concerns.[46]

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[44] Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 120.

[45] Robert H. Stein, *Studying the Synoptic Gospels: Origin and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 110-112.

[46] Collins, *Mark: A Commentary,* 211.

Authority and Empowerment

Jesus empowers the Apostles to preach and cast out demons, symbolizing ministry empowerment. In contemporary discipleship, this principle translates to empowering young adults to take on leadership roles and responsibilities within the church and the wider community.[47] Many young adults today are seeking opportunities to lead and make a difference, but they often feel underprepared or undervalued in traditional church settings.

The church can address this by offering leadership training, mentorship, and opportunities for young adults to showcase their gifts and talents. This could involve leading worship, teaching Bible studies, organizing outreach events, or engaging in church governance. Empowering young adults in this manner not only aids their growth in faith and leadership skills but also ensures that the church remains vibrant and relevant, benefiting from the fresh perspectives and energy that young adults provide.[48]

Navigating Challenges and Opposition

The inclusion of Judas Iscariot in the list of Apostles, along with the note that he would betray Jesus, serves as a sobering reminder of the challenges and opposition that disciples may encounter.[49] For young adults, this emphasizes the reality that following Jesus is not without its difficulties. They might face skepticism, rejection, or even hostility from peers, family members, or society at large.

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[47] Mark W. G. Stibbe, *Mark's Gospel as Literature and History* (Edinburgh, UK: T and T Clark, 1992), 88-90.

[48] Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 152.

[49] William R. Telford, *The Theology of the Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 125-127.

In contemporary culture, where relativism and secularism often prevail, young adults must be equipped to navigate these challenges with resilience and grace. The church can assist them by fostering a strong theological foundation, offering apologetics training, and nurturing a supportive community of encouragement and accountability. By addressing the likelihood of betrayal and opposition, the church aids young adults in developing a realistic and resilient faith that can endure the pressures of modern life.[50]

Holistic Discipleship

The comprehensive nature of the Apostles' mission to preach, heal, and cast out demons illustrates the holistic approach to discipleship that Jesus modeled.[51] For young adults, this means understanding that discipleship encompasses all aspects of life, including spiritual, emotional, relational, and social dimensions. Therefore, contemporary discipleship programs should be holistic, addressing the whole person and not just their spiritual needs.

This may include incorporating spiritual practices like prayer, Bible study, and worship alongside practical life skills, emotional well-being, and social involvement. Workshops covering subjects such as mental health, vocational discernment, and relationship dynamics can assist young adults in navigating the complexities of modern life while remaining rooted in their faith. By embracing a holistic approach to

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[50] Hagner, *The New Testament: A Historical and Theological Introduction*, 173.

[51] Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark's World in Literary-Historical Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 143-145.

discipleship, the church can more effectively support young adults in becoming well-rounded, spiritually mature individuals.[52]

Conclusion

Mark 3:13-19 offers a comprehensive framework for understanding and practicing discipleship among young adults in today's culture. This passage not only emphasizes Jesus' method of selecting and mentoring his Apostles, but it also provides a model for how the church can foster a discipleship culture that is intentional, relational, mission-driven, and transformative. Just as Jesus thoughtfully chose his disciples, empowered them with spiritual authority, and prepared them for ministry, the church today must embrace a similar approach to disciple young adults.

The contemporary landscape in which young adults navigate their faith is vastly different from that of previous generations. The digital age, marked by rapid technological advancements, instant access to information, and diverse worldviews, presents both challenges and opportunities for discipleship. Many young adults struggle with identity, purpose, and belonging, often feeling disconnected despite living in a hyper-connected world. The church must recognize these unique challenges and provide a discipleship model that meets young adults where they are while guiding them toward a Christ-centered life. Discipleship, as illustrated in Mark 3:13-19, is not a passive process but an active, intentional, and transformative journey. Jesus' call to his disciples serves as a blueprint for the church in engaging young adults today. By emphasizing the principles of intentionality, community, mission equipping, empowerment, resilience,

[52] Black, *Mark*, 115.

and holistic development, the church can disciple young adults in a way that is both relevant and impactful.

In a world where young adults encounter numerous challenges and evolving cultural landscapes, the church's role in guiding and supporting them on their spiritual journey is more important than ever. The demand for authentic relationships, meaningful community, and purpose-driven faith is as pressing today as it was in Jesus' time. Young adults are seeking meaning, stability, and direction, and the church has the unique opportunity to offer them a foundation rooted in biblical truth and Christ-centered living. However, this requires the church to be flexible, adaptive, and willing to connect with young adults at their level, addressing their questions, doubts, and aspirations with sincerity and wisdom.

To be truly effective, discipleship must extend beyond the church walls and into the spaces where young adults live, work, and interact. Jesus did not limit his teachings to the synagogue; he walked among the people, ate with sinners, and engaged with individuals in the midst of their daily lives. Likewise, the church must be present in the lives of young adults in ways that are tangible and relevant. Whether through small group ministries, online discipleship platforms, mentoring relationships, or service initiatives, the church must actively seek out and engage young adults where they are. The call to discipleship is not about drawing people into an institution but about guiding them into a vibrant, growing relationship with Christ that informs every aspect of their lives.

Furthermore, young adults need to be empowered to take ownership of their faith and actively engage in their spiritual development. Jesus did not simply instruct his disciples; he entrusted them with authority, giving them the responsibility to go out and

minister in his name. Similarly, the church should create opportunities for young adults to lead, serve, and contribute to the mission of Christ in ways that align with their gifts and passions. By fostering a culture of discipleship that encourages active participation, young adults are more likely to remain engaged in their faith and develop a sense of spiritual maturity and purpose.

Ultimately, the goal of discipleship is multiplication; raising followers of Christ who, in turn, disciple others. Jesus' ministry did not end with the twelve Apostles; rather, it set in motion a movement that would spread across generations and continents. This same principle applies today. If the church effectively disciples young adults, equipping them to disciple others, the impact will extend far beyond any single congregation or ministry. The influence of a well-discipled generation can shape families, communities, and entire societies for the glory of God.

By emulating Jesus' approach to discipleship, the church can help young adults develop a deep, resilient faith that engages with the world and creates a meaningful impact. As we mentor the next generation, let us honor the model demonstrated by Jesus in Mark 3:13-19 and aim to foster a discipleship culture that embodies His love, wisdom, and mission-driven focus. Through intentional and holistic discipleship, the church can empower young adults to become devoted followers of Christ who, in turn, disciple others and extend the reach of the kingdom of God. This is not merely a responsibility. It is a sacred calling with the power to transform lives, strengthen the church, and advance the Gospel in an ever-changing world.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The contemporary church faces numerous challenges, among which the effective discipleship of young adults stands out as a pressing issue. At Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, there is a noticeable gap in ministry specifically targeting young adults aged 21-40. This demographic is often at a crucial stage of life, grappling with significant transitions such as entering the workforce, pursuing higher education, and forming personal and professional identities. Despite the clear need, the current context at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church lacks a structured approach to discipling these individuals. The result is a disconnect, leaving young adults without the necessary spiritual guidance and community support that could profoundly shape their lives and faith journeys.[1] If ministry leaders participate in a training about discipling young adults, then they will be equipped to begin creating a young adults ministry designed to disciple these individuals.[2]

John Wesley's historical and theological contributions to Methodism offer a robust foundation for addressing this problem. Wesley's innovative practices and

[1] Randy L. Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley's Practical Theology* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1994), 45.

[2] David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), 67.

theological insights provide a rich resource for contemporary ministry, particularly in the area of young adult discipleship.[3] This document will explore how Wesley's approach to personal holiness, communal accountability, social engagement, and educational initiatives can inform and inspire the development of a dynamic young adult ministry at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church.[4]

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, was born on June 28, 1703, in Epworth, Lincolnshire, England. His upbringing played a significant role in shaping his theological outlook and leadership style, ultimately influencing the development of Methodism. Wesley's early life was steeped in the values of faith, discipline, and education, which were instilled by his parents, Samuel and Susanna Wesley.

Early Life and Family Background

John Wesley was the fifteenth child of Samuel and Susanna Wesley. His father, Samuel, was an Anglican clergyman and rector of Epworth, a position that came with both spiritual responsibilities and financial challenges. Samuel Wesley was a man of strong convictions and scholarly interests, having authored several works, including poetry and biblical commentary. Despite his intellectual pursuits, Samuel faced considerable financial difficulties, often struggling to support his large family.[5]

Susanna Wesley, John's mother, was an equally influential figure in his upbringing. She was the daughter of Dr. Samuel Annesley, a prominent Nonconformist

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[3] Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1964), 112.

[4] Theodore Runyon, *The New Creation: John Wesley's Theology Today* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1998), 89.

[5] Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London, UK: Epworth Press, 2002), 19.

minister. Susanna's deep religious commitment and educational philosophy had a profound impact on her children. She was known for her strict discipline and methodical approach to education, which later influenced John's own methodical practices in the formation of Methodism.[6]

Religious Education and Discipline

The Wesley household was marked by a rigorous religious routine. Susanna Wesley ensured that her children received a thorough education, both secular and religious. She personally tutored her children, teaching them to read and write from an early age. Each child received individual instruction for six hours a day, six days a week.[7] This disciplined approach to education laid the foundation for John's intellectual development and his ability to engage in deep theological reflection.[8] Religious instruction was equally important in the Wesley household. Family prayers were a daily occurrence, and Sunday was strictly observed as a day of worship and rest. Susanna's practice of setting aside time for individual conversations with each child about their spiritual progress became a model for John's later pastoral care.[9]

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[6] John A. Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism* (London, UK: Epworth Press, 1968), 31-32.

[7] Jean Miller Schmidt, *Grace Sufficient: A History of Women in American Methodism 1760-1939*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 215.

[8] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast,* 22.

[9] Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 37.

Education and Early Career

At the age of eleven, John Wesley was sent to the Charterhouse School in London, a significant step in his educational journey. The discipline and academic rigor of the Charterhouse further shaped his character.[10] In 1720, Wesley entered Christ Church, Oxford, where he pursued a degree in classical studies. His time at Oxford was marked by a serious engagement with his faith and studies.[11]

In 1725, Wesley was ordained as a deacon in the Church of England, and in 1726, he was elected a fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford.[12] This fellowship allowed him to continue his studies and to begin his role as a tutor. It was during his time at Oxford that Wesley formed the "Holy Club" with his brother Charles and a few other students.[13] The Holy Club was dedicated to the pursuit of a devout and disciplined Christian life, emphasizing prayer, Bible study, and charitable works. The methodical nature of their practices led to the members being mockingly referred to as "Methodists," a term that John Wesley would later embrace.[14]

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[10] Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory: Reflections on Early Methodism* (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 1989), 73.

[11] Kenneth J. Collins, *A Real Christian: The Life of John Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 48.

[12] Laurence W. Wood, *The Meaning of Pentecost in Early Methodism: Rediscovering John Wesley's Doctrine of Christian Perfection* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002), 88.

[13] Robert G. Tuttle, *John Wesley: His Life and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 145.

[14] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists,* 53.

The Influence of Family and Upbringing

Wesley's upbringing profoundly influenced his theological outlook and ministry. The discipline, educational rigor, and religious devotion instilled by his parents became hallmarks of his own ministry.[15] His mother's emphasis on personal piety and practical Christianity was reflected in his preaching and organizational methods.[16] Susanna Wesley's practice of meeting with each child individually to discuss their spiritual state found its echo in John Wesley's approach to pastoral care.[17] He placed a strong emphasis on small group meetings and personal accountability, which became a distinctive feature of the Methodist movement.[18]

Missionary Work and the Aldersgate Experience

In 1735, John Wesley embarked on a mission to the American colony of Georgia. The mission was largely unsuccessful, but it was a period of significant personal reflection for Wesley.[19] His encounters with Moravian missionaries deeply influenced his spiritual journey. The Moravians' assurance of faith and emphasis on personal religious

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[15] Theodore W. Jennings, *Good News to the Poor: John Wesley's Evangelical Economics* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1990), 135.

[16] Collins, *A Real Christian,* 61.

[17] Russell E. Richey, Kenneth E. Rowe, and Jean Miller Schmidt, *The Methodist Experience in America: A Sourcebook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 78.

[18] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 95.

[19] Steve Harper, *Devotional Life in the Wesleyan Tradition: A Workbook* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books, 1991), 164.

experience resonated with Wesley, who at the time was struggling with doubts about his own faith.[20]

Wesley's transformative spiritual experience occurred on May 24, 1738, at a meeting on Aldersgate Street in London.[21] During the reading of Martin Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans, Wesley felt his "heart strangely warmed." This experience of assurance and inner conversion became a turning point in his life and ministry, solidifying his commitment to evangelical work and the spread of the Methodist movement.[22]

Legacy

John Wesley's upbringing in a devout and disciplined household provided the foundation for his theological development and the formation of Methodism. His parents' influence, particularly his mother's emphasis on personal piety and education, shaped his approach to ministry and his emphasis on practical Christianity. Wesley's methodical and disciplined approach to religious practice, combined with his focus on personal religious experience, laid the groundwork for the global Methodist movement that continues to impact millions of lives today.[23]

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[20] Geordan Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford, NY: Oxford University Press, 2014), 88.

[21] Thomas C. Oden, *John Wesley's Scriptural Christianity: A Plain Exposition of His Teaching on Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 77.

[22] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists,* 81.

[23] Collins, *A Real Christian*, 104.

Formation of the "Methodist" Group

The term "Methodist" was initially used as a pejorative to describe the members of the Holy Club at Oxford, formed by John Wesley, his brother Charles, and other like-minded students around 1729. The group's disciplined and methodical approach to religious practice and study distinguished them from their contemporaries and led to the nickname “Methodists.”[24] The Holy Club's activities included regular prayer meetings, Bible study, and visits to prisons and workhouses, emphasizing practical piety and social action.[25]

Early Methodist Practices and Beliefs

The early Methodist movement was characterized by a strong emphasis on personal holiness, communal discipline, and evangelical outreach. Members of the Holy Club adhered to a rigorous schedule of religious observances, including fasting, frequent communion, and nightly review of their personal conduct. This methodical lifestyle was rooted in a desire to live a holy and disciplined life in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ.[26]

Wesley’s theological focus was on salvation by faith, the assurance of God’s love, and the necessity of personal holiness. Influenced by his Aldersgate experience in 1738, Wesley preached that salvation was accessible to all through faith in Jesus Christ. This experience of “heartfelt” religion contrasted with the more formal and ritualistic practices

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[24] Collins, *A Real Christian,* 104.

[25] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 61.

[26] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 88.

of the established Church of England.[27] Wesley also emphasized the doctrine of Christian perfection, which held that believers could achieve a state of sanctification or holiness in this life through the work of the Holy Spirit.[28]

Expansion and Organizational Development

The Methodist movement began to expand beyond Oxford as Wesley and his followers traveled extensively, preaching in churches, fields, and town squares. John Wesley's itinerant preaching, often conducted on horseback, took him across the length and breadth of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. He covered over 250,000 miles during his lifetime and delivered an estimated 40,000 sermons.[29] Wesley's charismatic preaching and personal example attracted large numbers of followers, many of whom were from the working classes and marginalized sections of society who felt neglected by the Church of England.

To manage the growing number of converts and ensure doctrinal consistency, Wesley developed a structured system of classes, bands, and societies. The class meeting, a small group of about twelve members, became the basic organizational unit of Methodism. Each class was led by a layperson who provided pastoral care, accountability, and guidance. These classes met weekly for prayer, Bible study, and

[27] Collins, *A Real Christian,* 112.

[28] Collins, *A Real Christian,* 118.

[29] Hammond, *John Wesley in America,* 99.

mutual support.[30] Bands were smaller, more intimate groups focused on confession and spiritual growth, while societies were larger gatherings for worship and preaching.[31]

Wesley also established the annual Methodist Conference, beginning in 1744, to provide oversight and coordination for the movement. The Conference brought together preachers and lay leaders to discuss theological issues, organizational matters, and strategies for evangelism. This hierarchical yet flexible structure allowed Methodism to maintain unity and coherence while adapting to local contexts.[32]

Conflicts with the Church of England

The rapid growth and distinctive practices of the Methodist movement led to tensions with the Church of England. Many Anglican clergy viewed Wesley's itinerant preaching and emphasis on lay leadership as a challenge to ecclesiastical authority. Wesley himself remained committed to the Church of England, viewing Methodism as a revival movement within the church rather than a separate denomination.[33] However, his actions often brought him into conflict with church authorities.

Wesley's practice of field preaching, delivering sermons in open-air settings rather than inside church buildings, was particularly controversial. This method allowed him to reach large audiences, including those who would not normally attend church services. Despite initial reluctance, Wesley adopted field preaching as a necessary means

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[30] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast,* 154.

[31] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists,* 137.

[32] Collins, *A Real Christian,* 123.

[33] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast,* 179.

of spreading the Gospel.[34] This approach, while effective in reaching the masses, was criticized by many Anglican clergy who saw it as disorderly and inappropriate.

The Methodists also faced opposition from local authorities and hostile crowds. Wesley and his followers were frequently subjected to harassment, physical attacks, and disruptions of their meetings. Despite these challenges, Wesley's unwavering commitment and organizational skills helped the movement to persevere and grow.[35]

Impact on Society and Legacy

The Methodist movement had a profound impact on British society. Its emphasis on personal piety, social justice, and charitable works resonated with many, particularly among the working classes. Methodism provided a sense of community, purpose, and moral guidance during a time of social and economic upheaval brought about by the Industrial Revolution.[36]

Methodist societies established schools, orphanages, and clinics, addressing the educational and health needs of the poor. Wesley himself was a vocal advocate for social justice, speaking out against slavery, prison conditions, and economic inequality. His writings and sermons emphasized the importance of caring for the poor and marginalized, reflecting his belief that true Christian faith must be accompanied by practical acts of love and service.[37]

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[34] Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*, 215.

[35] Richard P. Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 2:24.

[36] Hammond, *John Wesley in America,* 105.

[37] Collins, *A Real Christian,* 142.

The impact of Methodism extended beyond Britain. Wesley's writings and the organizational model of Methodism influenced the development of evangelical movements in Europe and North America. The Great Awakening in the American colonies, for instance, was shaped by Methodist principles and practices.[38] After Wesley's death in 1791, Methodism continued to grow, eventually becoming a global movement with millions of adherents worldwide.

Separation from the Church of England

Despite Wesley's intention for Methodism to remain within the Church of England, practical considerations and growing numbers led to a de facto separation. Lay preachers, initially intended to assist ordained clergy, took on increasingly important roles in leading Methodist societies.[39] The need for sacraments, particularly communion, which the Anglican clergy were often unwilling or unable to provide for Methodists, pushed the movement further towards independence.[40]

In 1784, Wesley took a significant step by ordaining Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury as superintendents (later bishops) for the Methodist work in America, a move that effectively created a separate Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.[41]This ordination marked a turning point, signaling a shift towards full ecclesiastical independence. Wesley's decision was driven by pragmatic concerns, recognizing the need for ordained leaders to serve the rapidly expanding Methodist societies in the Americas.

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[38] Heitzenrater*, Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 201.

[39] Collins, *A Real Christian*, 170.

[40] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 201.

[41] Hammond, *John Wesley in America,* 182.

The Wesleyan Legacy

John Wesley's legacy extends far beyond the establishment of a new denomination. His theological contributions, particularly his emphasis on salvation through faith and the pursuit of holiness, have had a lasting influence on Protestant Christianity.[42] Methodism's structured approach to discipleship and community life has been adopted and adapted by various Christian movements. Wesley's emphasis on education and social reform also left a lasting mark. He championed education for all, founding schools and promoting literacy among the poor. The Methodist tradition of social activism continued into the 19th and 20th centuries, influencing movements for labor rights, women's suffrage, and civil rights.[43] Moreover, Wesley's pioneering use of lay preachers and his establishment of small groups for mutual support and accountability prefigured modern small group ministries and the lay leadership models now common in many denominations.[44] His innovative approaches to evangelism and pastoral care continue to inspire contemporary church leaders.

Global Methodism

Today, Methodism is a global movement with a diverse and dynamic presence. The World Methodist Council represents over eighty million Methodists in more than 130 countries. The Methodist Church's emphasis on personal holiness, social justice, and evangelism remains central to its mission.[45]

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[42] Collins, *A Real Christian*, 195.

[43] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast,* 240.

[44] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists,* 217.

[45] Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism,* 145.

In many parts of the world, Methodist churches are at the forefront of social and economic development, advocating for human rights, providing education and healthcare, and supporting sustainable development initiatives.[46] Methodism's commitment to inclusivity and social justice has made it a powerful force for change in many societies. The formation and growth of the Methodist movement under John Wesley's leadership represent a remarkable chapter in the history of Christianity. From its humble beginnings as a small group of Oxford students dedicated to personal holiness and social action, Methodism grew into a global force for spiritual renewal and social reform. Wesley's disciplined approach to faith, innovative organizational methods, and unwavering commitment to evangelism and social justice laid the foundations for a movement that continues to impact millions of lives around the world. The legacy of John Wesley and the Methodist movement he founded is a testament to the enduring power of faith, discipline, and social engagement in transforming individuals and societies.

Contemporary Contributions of John Wesley's Methodism to Young Adult Discipleship (Ages 21-40)

John Wesley's work in the development of Methodism offers a rich resource for contemporary discipleship, particularly among young adults aged twenty-one through forty. The principles and practices established by Wesley can be adapted to meet the spiritual and practical needs of this demographic, addressing the challenges they face in the modern world. This exploration will discuss how Wesley's emphasis on personal

[46] Hammond, *John Wesley in America,* 156.

holiness, communal accountability, social engagement, and educational initiatives can contribute to the discipleship of young adults today.

Personal Holiness and Spiritual Growth

John Wesley's emphasis on personal holiness and spiritual growth is particularly relevant for young adults seeking depth and meaning in their spiritual lives. Wesley believed that Christians should strive for perfection in love, a process he called sanctification.[47] This theological emphasis encourages believers to grow continually in their relationship with God and to exhibit Christ-like character in their daily lives.

For young adults, this call to personal holiness can be transformative. In a world where they often face pressures related to career advancement, social status, and personal fulfillment, Wesley's teachings offer a counter-cultural message that prioritizes spiritual maturity and ethical living.[48] Discipleship programs for young adults can incorporate Wesleyan principles by emphasizing regular spiritual disciplines such as prayer, Bible study, fasting, and self-examination. These practices help individuals develop a disciplined spiritual life that can sustain them through life's challenges.

Communal Accountability and Small Groups

One of the key organizational innovations of early Methodism was the use of small groups, or class meetings, for mutual support and accountability. Wesley organized Methodists into small groups where members could share their spiritual struggles,

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[47] Collins, *A Real Christian,* 170.

[48] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 201.

confess sins, and encourage one another.[49] This model of communal accountability is highly applicable to young adults today, who often seek authentic community and meaningful relationships.

In contemporary settings, small groups can provide a supportive environment where young adults can explore their faith, ask difficult questions, and receive encouragement.[50] These groups can be adapted to address the specific needs and interests of young adults, such as career development, relationships, mental health, and social justice. The intimacy and trust developed in small groups create a safe space for honest dialogue and personal growth, which is essential for effective discipleship.

Social Engagement and Justice

Wesley's commitment to social justice and practical acts of charity is another aspect of Methodism that resonates with young adults. Wesley was deeply concerned with the social issues of his time, such as poverty, inequality, and slavery. He believed that true Christian faith must be expressed through active engagement in social justice and care for the marginalized.[51]

Today, many young adults are passionate about social justice and seek to make a positive impact in their communities. Discipleship programs can harness this enthusiasm by encouraging young adults to participate in social justice initiatives, volunteer work, and

[49] Collins, *A Real Christian,* 174.

[50] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 208.

[51] Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, 156.

community service.[52] By engaging in these activities, young adults can live out their faith in tangible ways, embodying the principles of Methodism and making a difference in the world.

Educational Initiatives and Lifelong Learning

Education was a central concern for Wesley, who founded schools and promoted literacy among the poor. He believed that education was essential for spiritual and moral development.[53] This emphasis on education and lifelong learning is particularly relevant for young adults, who are often in a stage of life where they are pursuing higher education and professional development.

Discipleship programs can incorporate educational initiatives that promote both spiritual and intellectual growth.[54] This might include Bible studies, theological courses, leadership training, and vocational discernment workshops. By providing opportunities for continued learning and development, these programs can help young adults integrate their faith with their personal and professional lives.

Digital Discipleship and Technology

In today's digital age, technology plays a significant role in the lives of young adults. Wesley's innovative approach to communication and evangelism can inspire contemporary methods of digital discipleship. Wesley utilized the printing press to

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[52] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 220.

[53] Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*, 145.

[54] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 217.

disseminate his sermons, tracts, and writings widely.[55] Similarly, modern discipleship can leverage digital platforms to reach young adults.

Online communities, social media, podcasts, and virtual small groups can be effective tools for discipleship.[56] These platforms provide flexibility and accessibility, allowing young adults to engage with spiritual content and connect with others despite busy schedules and geographical barriers. Digital discipleship initiatives can include online Bible studies, virtual prayer meetings, and social media campaigns that address relevant issues and provide spiritual encouragement.

Mentorship and Leadership Development

Wesley's approach to leadership development through mentorship and lay involvement is another valuable aspect for contemporary discipleship. He trained and empowered lay preachers and leaders, recognizing the importance of developing local leadership.[57] This emphasis on mentorship can be particularly beneficial for young adults who are navigating their career paths and personal lives. Discipleship programs can include mentorship schemes where older, more experienced Christians provide guidance and support to younger adults.[58] These relationships can help young adults develop their spiritual gifts, gain practical wisdom, and build confidence in their leadership abilities. Additionally, providing opportunities for young adults to take on leadership roles within the church can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility in their faith communities.

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[55] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast,* 230.

[56] Heitzenrater, *The Elusive Mr. Wesley*, 271.

[57] Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, 182.

[58] Collins, *A Real Christian*, 195.

Integration of Faith and Work

Wesley's teachings on the integration of faith and daily life are particularly relevant for young adults in the workforce. He believed that all aspects of life, including work, should be conducted to the glory of God.[59] This holistic approach to faith encourages young adults to see their professional lives as an arena for living out their Christian values.

Discipleship programs can help young adults explore how their faith influences their work ethics, decision-making, and interactions with colleagues.[60] Workshops and discussions on vocational calling, ethical dilemmas in the workplace, and balancing work and personal life can provide practical guidance. This integration of faith and work helps young adults to see their professional endeavors as part of their spiritual journey.

Addressing Contemporary Issues

Wesley's ability to address the social and spiritual issues of his time provides a model for contemporary discipleship to engage with the current challenges facing young adults. Issues such as mental health, social justice, environmental sustainability, and digital ethics are pressing concerns for this age group.[61] Discipleship programs can create forums for discussing these issues from a Christian perspective, offering theological insights and practical responses.[62] By addressing contemporary issues, these programs

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[59] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 240.

[60] Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, 2014.

[61] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, 221.

[62] Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 250.

can demonstrate the relevance of Christian faith to all areas of life, helping young adults to navigate the complexities of the modern world with a grounded and informed faith.

Community Building and Inclusivity

Methodism's emphasis on inclusive community building is particularly significant for young adults who seek belonging and acceptance. Wesley's inclusive approach, which welcomed people from various social backgrounds, provides a model for creating diverse and welcoming faith communities.[63] Contemporary discipleship programs can foster inclusive communities where young adults from different cultural, economic, and social backgrounds feel valued and accepted.[64] Activities that promote fellowship, such as social events, retreats, and service projects, can help build strong, supportive relationships among young adults. By creating inclusive and welcoming spaces, these programs can help young adults experience the love of Christ through the community.

Conclusion

John Wesley's work in the development of Methodism offers a wealth of insights and practices that can significantly contribute to the discipleship of young adults aged twenty-one through forty. His emphasis on personal holiness, communal accountability, social engagement, and education provides a robust framework for addressing the spiritual and practical needs of young adults today. By adapting Wesleyan principles to

[63] Newton, *Susanna Wesley and the Puritan Tradition in Methodism*, 160.

[64] Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists,* 225.

contemporary contexts, discipleship programs can help young adults grow in their faith, develop meaningful relationships, and engage with the world in transformative ways.

The relevance of Wesley's approach to modern discipleship lies in its holistic and integrated nature, which addresses both the personal and communal aspects of faith. As young adults navigate the complexities of modern life, the Wesleyan model offers a comprehensive and adaptable approach to spiritual growth and community engagement. Through the application of Wesley's principles, contemporary discipleship can empower young adults to live out their faith authentically and make a positive impact in their communities and beyond.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to establish Theological Foundations for a project focused on young adult discipleship at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. Grounded in missiology, the study of the Church's mission and its participation in God's redemptive work, this foundation provides a framework for understanding how the Church can effectively disciple young adults in today's evolving cultural and generational landscape. Missiology, with its emphasis on holistic, contextualized, and community-based discipleship, serves as the theological and practical lens through which this project is developed. This document is organized by providing a general overview of Missiology, providing the problem statement and hypothesis, an in-depth analysis of Missiology in relation to the problem statement and hypothesis, and the conclusion.

General Overview of Missiology

This section introduces Missiology as a field, explaining its core principles, biblical foundations, and relevance to the Church's mission to make disciples. Missiology involves not only understanding the Great Commission but also contextualizing the

Gospel to address contemporary challenges.[1] This overview highlights the shift in missiological focus from traditional institutional approaches to relational and contextual methods that better align with young adult discipleship needs.

Problem Statement and Hypothesis

This section presents the problem statement. The problem at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church is that the context is not currently discipling its young adults. The hypothesis statement is if ministry leaders participate in a training about discipling young adults, then they will be equipped to begin creating a young adults ministry designed to disciple these individuals. The problem statement articulates a gap in Daniel Chapel's current discipleship efforts,[2] while the hypothesis proposes that equipping ministry leaders through targeted training can address this gap by laying the foundation for an effective young adult discipleship ministry.

In-Depth Analysis of Missiology in Relation to the Problem Statement and Hypothesis

This core section provides an analysis of missiology as it applies to young adult discipleship, exploring why missiological principles are crucial for Daniel Chapel's context. Key concepts such as the Missio Dei (Mission of God), contextualization, holistic discipleship, and the incarnational mission approach will be discussed.[3] This

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[1] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 213.

[2] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 368.

[3] Darrell L. Guder, ed., *Missional Church: A Vision for the Sending of the Church in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 10.

analysis will demonstrate that Missiology provides both the theological rationale and practical guidance necessary for discipling young adults in a way that is relevant and effective.

Conclusion

The document concludes by discussing how missiology is foundational to the focus of this study on young adult discipleship. It will summarize the key missiological insights that support Daniel Chapel's approach to designing a young adult ministry, reinforcing the importance of training leaders in discipleship strategies suited for engaging and nurturing young adults. This conclusion underscores the alignment between missiology's emphasis on contextual, relational discipleship and the Church's mandate to foster spiritual growth across generations.[4]

This structure demonstrates that missiology offers a comprehensive approach to young adult discipleship by integrating theological foundations and practical ministry strategies. By grounding the project in Missiology, Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church can develop a ministry that is mission-centered and equipped to disciple and empower young adults within its unique context.

Missiology: An Overview

Missiology, the study of the mission of the Church, examines the theological foundations, strategies, and practices that define how the Church fulfills its purpose in the world. At its core, missiology revolves around participating in the Missio Dei, the

[4] George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Gelder, *The Church Between Gospel and Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 226.

Mission of God, to bring redemption, reconciliation, and restoration to all of creation. This mission is evident in the Church's call to share the Gospel, make disciples, and embody the love and justice of Christ in every community. As the Church encounters new social, cultural, and generational dynamics, missiology offers a framework for understanding how to engage effectively with these changes, bringing the Gospel to bear in meaningful ways.

Missiology includes several elements, such as biblical foundations, historical insights, cultural analysis, and practical methodologies. Biblically, missiology draws from passages like the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus commands His followers to make disciples of all nations. This directive underpins the purpose of the Church and lays the groundwork for missional efforts. Historically, missiology examines how the Church has engaged in mission throughout various eras, analyzing successes and challenges to apply learned insights to modern contexts. Culturally, it emphasizes contextualization, which involves presenting the Gospel in ways that are relevant and accessible to specific people groups or demographics. This aspect of missiology is crucial for engaging young adults, as it requires understanding their unique worldview, challenges, and needs.

A key emphasis in missiology today is the shift from a primarily institutional understanding of mission to a more relational and incarnational approach. This approach highlights being present within the community, understanding its dynamics, and responding to its specific needs. Missiologist David Bosch characterized this shift as moving from a "mission of the Church" to a "mission by the Church" that actively

participates in God's redemptive work within the community.[5] This shift aligns closely with the concept of holistic discipleship, in which the Church does not merely seek converts but aims to nurture fully formed disciples who embody and extend the message of Jesus.

Missiology also emphasizes the Church's call to disciple all generations, including young adults, who are at a crucial stage of identity formation and life development. A missional approach to young adult discipleship involves creating an environment where they can engage deeply with their faith, ask questions, build meaningful relationships, and grow spiritually in ways that are relevant to their unique life stage. Therefore, Missiology provides a comprehensive lens through which the Church can examine its discipleship efforts and consider how to meet the spiritual needs of emerging generations.

Problem Statement

The issue at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church is that it is not effectively discipling its young adults. Like many congregations, Daniel Chapel encounters a challenge in reaching and retaining young adults, who often feel disconnected from traditional church structures or view the Church as irrelevant to their lives. Young adults today navigate a rapidly changing world, characterized by shifting social values, technological advancements, and growing skepticism toward institutions. They often desire authenticity, inclusivity, and a sense of purpose, which may not consistently align with conventional church practices or approaches. Consequently, they may become disengaged, attend sporadically, or drift away from the Church altogether.

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[5] James W. White, *The Church and the Community: Engaging Young Adults in a Missional Context* (New York, NY: Pilgrim Press, 2017), 132.

This issue mirrors a larger challenge within the Church: the necessity to disciple young adults in ways that resonate with their unique life stages, values, and inquiries. Young adults are navigating significant transitions such as pursuing higher education, entering the workforce, or exploring relationships that shape their worldview and influence their faith journeys. Without intentional discipleship tailored to their needs, young adults may struggle to see how their faith connects to these challenges, resulting in a weakened or stagnant spiritual life. For Daniel Chapel, this lack of engagement means young adults miss opportunities for spiritual growth, community support, and mentorship from older, more experienced believers.

Furthermore, Daniel Chapel may be overlooking the unique perspectives and contributions that young adults offer to the life of the Church. Young adults often bring energy, creativity, and a fresh viewpoint that can enhance the entire congregation. However, without deliberate discipleship efforts, these strengths remain untapped, and the Church's overall mission and community impact may be limited. Therefore, addressing this issue requires a focused strategy that includes training ministry leaders on effective methods for mentoring young adults.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this project is that if ministry leaders at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church participate in a training about discipling young adults, then they will be equipped to begin creating a young adults ministry designed to disciple these individuals. This hypothesis is based on the premise that effective discipleship requires not only a

vision for young adult ministry but also practical skills, strategies, and a theological understanding of why disciplining young adults is essential.

A training program focused on young adult discipleship would cover several core areas. First, it would address the theological foundation of discipleship, helping ministry leaders understand that discipleship is a vital component of the Church's mission and essential for nurturing mature believers. Leaders would learn that mentoring young adults is not merely an option but a calling that aligns with the Church's responsibility to support the faith journeys of all its members. Grasping this theological foundation equips leaders with the motivation to engage in young adult ministry with commitment and purpose.

Second, the training would introduce leaders to the cultural dynamics and unique needs of young adults. As noted, young adults today face a distinct set of challenges involving questions about identity, purpose, and belonging. Addressing these needs requires ministry leaders to develop an understanding of how cultural trends shape young adults' perspectives on faith, community, and personal growth. Therefore, the training would encourage leaders to adopt a posture of listening, empathy, and contextualization as they formulate a ministry strategy that resonates with the hearts and minds of young adults.

Third, the training would equip participants with practical tools and strategies for effective discipleship among young adults. These resources might include techniques for small group facilitation, mentorship programs, and service opportunities that enable young adults to put their faith into action. Practical strategies could also involve creating spaces for young adults to engage in open discussions, ask questions, and build

relationships with peers and mentors. A successful training program would therefore empower ministry leaders to develop a young adults ministry that not only attracts young adults but also helps them grow as disciples of Christ.

Ultimately, the training would cultivate a spirit of collaboration among ministry leaders, highlighting that young adult discipleship is a collective effort rather than an individual task. By joining forces, ministry leaders can develop a holistic approach that incorporates young adult discipleship into the wider life of the Church. This collaborative method aligns with missiological principles, which emphasize the significance of community and the Church's shared responsibility in making disciples.[6]

If the ministry leaders at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church receive proper training, they will acquire the theological understanding, cultural awareness, and practical skills necessary for effectively discipling young adults. This training will not only address the existing gap in young adult engagement but will also establish a foundation for a thriving young adult ministry that promotes growth, fosters community, and empowers young adults to engage in God's mission. Through this initiative, Daniel Chapel can transform into a church where young adults feel valued, understood, and inspired to practice their faith in every aspect of life.

The Missio Dei and the Purpose of the Church in Young Adult Discipleship

The concept of Missio Dei, or "Mission of God," is central to Missiology and highlights that mission originates with God Himself, not human efforts. Theologically, the Missio Dei represents God's redemptive purpose, as revealed in scripture, which

[6] Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insights for Missionaries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1985), 75.

encompasses all of creation. God's mission aims to bring reconciliation, restoration, and the full realization of His kingdom on earth. This divine mission is disclosed in both the Old and New Testaments, from God's covenant with Abraham, calling him to be a blessing to all nations[7], to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, where Jesus commands His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations." Therefore, the Church exists not to establish its own mission but to engage in God's ongoing work in the world.[8]

This theological foundation suggests that every action and purpose of the Church should align with God's mission. The Church's role is not merely to uphold traditions or facilitate programs but to embody the transformative power of the Gospel in ways that engage and redeem the world. For Daniel Chapel, embracing the Missio Dei as a guiding framework for young adult discipleship means seeing young adults not just as recipients of ministry but as vital participants in God's redemptive mission.

Application of the Missio Dei to Young Adult Discipleship

Viewing young adult discipleship through the lens of the Missio Dei transforms the approach to ministry by shifting the focus from retention to active engagement in God's mission. In many churches, young adult ministry has traditionally centered on keeping young adults connected to the church through social events, worship services, or age-specific programs. While these are valuable, they often lack a mission-driven purpose. The Missio Dei challenges this by encouraging the Church to involve young adults in God's work, helping them see their lives as essential to advancing the Gospel.

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[7] Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002), 32.

[8] Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 87.

Young adults today are seeking authenticity, purpose, and community in ways that traditional church structures sometimes overlook. A missiological perspective on young adult discipleship provides a solution by inviting them into a meaningful narrative where they can make a difference. This approach aligns with the developmental stage of young adulthood, in which individuals often explore their identity, seek meaningful relationships, and desire to impact the world.[9] By grounding discipleship in the Missio Dei, Daniel Chapel can create opportunities for young adults to actively engage with their faith, helping them recognize how their unique gifts and passions contribute to God's redemptive purposes.

Training Leaders to Adopt a Missio Dei Perspective

For ministry leaders at Daniel Chapel, adopting a Missio Dei-oriented approach necessitates a shift in how they perceive and facilitate discipleship. Rather than merely concentrating on teaching doctrine or organizing church activities, leaders can be trained to assist young adults in uncovering their distinct roles within God's mission. This training might encompass theological education on the Missio Dei, practical workshops for recognizing individual gifts, and chances for young adults to serve both within and outside the church.

One practical way to implement this is through mentorship programs that pair young adults with mature believers who are actively involved in mission work. Such relationships can help young adults understand that discipleship is not merely a personal journey, but a collective endeavor aligned with God's purposes for humanity. Mentors

[9] White, *The Church and the Community*, 104.

can model a missional lifestyle and encourage young adults to engage in service opportunities, justice initiatives, and community outreach, thereby embodying the Missio Dei in tangible ways.[10]

Impact of the Missio Dei on Ministry Effectiveness

When young adults are invited into God's mission, their involvement in the church gains new depth and significance. A Missio Dei-oriented discipleship not only fulfills their desire for purpose and connection but also cultivates a stronger commitment to the church's community and vision. Research on young adult engagement in the church shows that individuals are more likely to stay committed when they find their faith meaningful and can actively contribute to a greater purpose.[11] Daniel Chapel's young adult ministry, when centered on the Missio Dei, can function as a vibrant space for spiritual growth, mission engagement, and community building, creating an atmosphere where young adults are both disciples and disciple-makers.

The Missio Dei provides a compelling framework for rethinking young adult discipleship at Daniel Chapel. By training ministry leaders to view discipleship as an invitation into God's mission, the church can equip young adults to live out their faith meaningfully. This approach not only addresses the problem of disengagement but also empowers young adults to play an active role in the church's life and mission, fostering a vibrant community of faith that is united in purpose and action.

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[10] David Kinnaman and Aly Hawkins, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians Are Leaving Church and Rethinking Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 56.

[11] Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2004), 44.

Contextualization and Its Role in Effective Discipleship

The Importance of Contextualization in Missiology

Contextualization is a cornerstone of missiological theory. It focuses on presenting the Gospel in ways that resonate with specific cultural, social, and generational contexts. Rooted in the idea that God's message transcends cultures while remaining universally applicable, contextualization ensures that the message of Christ speaks meaningfully to people within their unique cultural framework.[12] Contextualization prevents the Gospel from becoming culturally irrelevant or misunderstood by addressing particular values, beliefs, and worldviews of the audience it aims to reach.

The Apostle Paul's approach to contextualization serves as an early biblical model. In 1 Corinthians 9:22, Paul states, "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." His willingness to adapt to cultural expectations enabled Paul to convey the Gospel in ways that his audience could understand and accept. This principle has persisted throughout Christian history, as missionaries have adapted the Gospel message to resonate with various cultural contexts, ensuring that each generation can engage with God's message in an understandable and relevant manner.[13]

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[12] Chap Clark and Kara E. Powell, *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 90.

[13] Kara Powell, Jake Mulder, and Brad Griffin, *Growing Young: Six Essential Strategies to Help Young People Discover and Love Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2016), 112.

The Need for Contextualization in Young Adult Ministry

Today, young adults live in a rapidly shifting cultural landscape marked by technological advancement, changing social norms, and evolving expectations of community and identity. According to recent studies, young adults increasingly prioritize authenticity, inclusivity, and purpose in their personal and spiritual lives.[14] To effectively reach this generation, Daniel Chapel's young adult ministry must understand these priorities and develop a contextualized approach that speaks to their unique experiences, aspirations, and concerns.

Contextualization in young adult ministry requires a profound understanding of the cultural dynamics that influence young adults today. Social issues like racial justice, mental health awareness, environmental responsibility, and economic challenges are vital concerns for many young adults. By addressing these topics in a manner that aligns with biblical values, Daniel Chapel can illustrate the Gospel's relevance to all aspects of life and position the church as a community that truly understands and supports young adults in their spiritual and social journeys.[15]

Training Leaders to Contextualize Discipleship for Young Adults

For ministry leaders at Daniel Chapel, contextualizing young adult discipleship starts with a process of honest learning and understanding the specific issues and concerns that young adults face. Leaders must develop cultural awareness and be willing to engage in conversations about societal topics, even when these topics may challenge

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[14] Kenda Creasy Dean, *Almost Christian: What the Faith of Our Teenagers Is Telling the American Church* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 68.

[15] Guder, ed., *Missional Church*, 11.

traditional church norms or perspectives. Training leaders to understand and engage with young adults' perspectives requires a shift from a prescriptive model of discipleship to a dialogical one, where leaders listen to young adults and encourage them to explore their faith openly and honestly.

Workshops on cultural literacy and generational studies could be crucial in equipping leaders to effectively contextualize their ministry. This training would include current generational research on young adults, focusing on their values, attitudes, and relationship with faith. Leaders would also gain insights into sociological tools for assessing cultural trends, allowing them to adapt ministry programs and messages to meet young adults where they are.[16] This training promotes empathy and understanding, encouraging leaders to view young adults not just as attendees but as individuals shaped by their cultural contexts and searching for faith that resonates with their experiences.

Practical Applications of Contextualization in Young Adult Discipleship

Several practical strategies can help Daniel Chapel contextualize its young adult ministry. First, incorporating discussions on relevant social issues within discipleship settings can engage young adults and demonstrate the Gospel's applicability to their everyday lives. Bible studies that explore themes of justice, stewardship, and compassion resonate with young adults' desire to make a positive impact on the world. Such studies can be structured around passages that address these issues, like Micah 6:8's call to "do

[16] Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the Twenty-First Century Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003), 35.

justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God," thus grounding current social concerns in biblical teaching.[17]

Second, Daniel Chapel could establish small groups that concentrate on real-life applications of faith, such as managing finances wisely, promoting mental wellness, and nurturing healthy relationships. These subjects are both practical and biblically based, equipping young adults with resources for spiritual and personal development. Furthermore, by tackling issues that matter to young adults, these groups encourage engagement, as participants recognize that the Church cares about their overall well-being.[18]

Third, creating an environment for young adults to share their thoughts and questions about faith is essential. Many young adults today approach spirituality with skepticism, often due to perceived disconnects between the Church's teachings and modern values. By fostering a culture of open dialogue, where questions are encouraged and differing viewpoints are respectfully explored, Daniel Chapel can help young adults feel heard and valued. Structured question and answers sessions, open forums, and discussion panels can be effective tools for promoting such conversations. This approach aligns with Jesus' own method of connecting with people through questions and dialogue, establishing spaces where understanding can develop organically.[19]

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[17] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 123.

[18] David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, *UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks about Christianity … and Why It Matters* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 78.

[19] Dean, *Almost Christian*, 96.

Challenges and Solutions in Contextualization

While contextualization is important, it also presents challenges. One potential issue is balancing cultural relevance with theological integrity. As leaders adjust their strategies to reach young adults, they must avoid compromising core biblical truths in favor of popularity or adherence to secular values. To tackle this, the leaders at Daniel Chapel can establish a solid theological foundation that informs their contextualization efforts. For instance, framing social justice within a biblical worldview ensures the church stays true to its mission while addressing topics that resonate with young adults.

Another challenge is to overcome generational misunderstandings within the broader congregation. Older church members may view cultural engagement efforts aimed at young adults as unnecessary or even problematic. Building a culture of mutual understanding and respect between generations can help address these concerns. Leaders can facilitate intergenerational dialogues to foster empathy, demonstrating that contextualization is not about diluting the Gospel but about making it accessible and meaningful in today's world. These dialogues also allow young adults to feel valued and understood by the wider church community, fostering a sense of unity across age groups.[20]

Long-Term Impact of Contextualization in Discipleship

When contextualization is thoughtfully applied, it has the potential to strengthen young adult discipleship and encourage long-term engagement with the church. By

[20] Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 94.

providing a culturally aware and responsive ministry environment, Daniel Chapel can help young adults integrate their faith into all aspects of life. This approach not only supports spiritual growth but also creates a foundation for lifelong discipleship, as young adults learn to see the Gospel as relevant and transformative in their everyday experiences.

Furthermore, a contextualized approach can turn Daniel Chapel into a welcoming community for new young adults. As young adults increasingly seek communities that align with their values, a church that is both anchored in biblical truth and responsive to contemporary issues will appeal to them more. Thus, contextualization functions as both a discipleship tool and a missional strategy, allowing Daniel Chapel to engage young adults who might otherwise feel disconnected from the church.

In summary, contextualization is an essential component of young adult discipleship at Daniel Chapel. By understanding the cultural and social dynamics that influence young adults' lives, the church can develop a discipleship model that resonates deeply with this generation. Through contextualization, ministry leaders can communicate the Gospel in ways that address young adults' questions, concerns, and aspirations, making it relevant to their distinct life stage. Ultimately, this approach aligns with missiology's emphasis on bringing the Gospel to people in a manner that speaks to their real-world contexts, fostering a church environment where young adults can grow as disciples and active participants in God's mission.

The Incarnational Approach to Mission and Its Relevance for Young Adults

The Principle of Incarnational Mission

Incarnational mission is a foundational concept in Missiology, emphasizing that the Church should embody the Gospel within its community, much like Christ "took on flesh" to dwell among humanity (Jn. 1:14). This approach to mission involves entering into the lives and concerns of others, establishing authentic relationships, and communicating the Gospel not just through words but through actions, presence, and empathy. Incarnational mission is often contrasted with distant or programmatic evangelism, instead calling believers to immerse themselves within their communities to understand and meet their specific needs.[21]

Incarnational mission is based on the idea that ministry is most effective when it is relational and present in the everyday lives of others. By "being with" people in their contexts, believers tangibly convey the love of Christ. This approach mirrors Christ's model of ministry; He did not stay detached but lived, worked, and suffered alongside those He aimed to reach. In doing so, Jesus provided a model for the Church's approach to mission, emphasizing the significance of empathy, humility, and deep relational engagement.[22]

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[21] Chap Clark, *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 112.

[22] Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016), 67.

The Relevance of Incarnational Mission for Young Adults

The concept of incarnational mission has particular resonance for young adults, who often value authenticity and relational depth over institutional programming. Studies have shown that young adults are more likely to engage with faith communities that demonstrate genuine concern for their lives and struggles, rather than simply offering structured programs or services.[23] Many young adults look for places where they feel truly recognized, where relationships are mutual, and where their questions and challenges are acknowledged and addressed.

For Daniel Chapel, embracing an incarnational approach to young adult discipleship means prioritizing relationships over programs, emphasizing presence over performance, and viewing discipleship as a journey of shared experiences. An incarnational mission involves more than inviting young adults to church services or events; it urges ministry leaders to connect with young adults in their daily lives, engage with their concerns, and participate actively in their communities. This approach resonates deeply with young adults' desire for community, relationship, and relevance, building trust and credibility that can pave the way for deeper spiritual engagement.[24]

Training Ministry Leaders for Incarnational Discipleship

To disciple young adults through an incarnational lens, ministry leaders at Daniel Chapel must be equipped with relational skills and practices that emphasize presence,

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[23] Ed Stetzer and Philip Nation, *Compelled: Living the Mission of God* (Nashville, TN: B and H Publishing Group, 2012), 56.

[24] David G. Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship and Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2002), 34.

empathy, and mutual support. Training leaders in incarnational discipleship involves guiding them to invest time in getting to know young adults, understanding their cultural and social contexts, and demonstrating genuine care and commitment to their growth. Leaders should adopt a posture of listening and learning, approaching young adults as equals and co-participants in the journey of faith rather than merely recipients of teaching.

Practical training may include role-playing scenarios to enhance active listening, empathy, and non-judgmental responses. Leaders can learn to engage with young adults' questions and concerns without predetermined answers, fostering an environment where they feel comfortable exploring their faith honestly. Additionally, leaders could be trained in methods for building authentic, consistent relationships that extend beyond church setting to sconnecting with young adults in informal spaces like cafes, small group gatherings, and even through volunteer or community service activities. This relational investment lays a foundation of trust, showing that Daniel Chapel is not merely focused on young adults' attendance but on their overall well-being and spiritual journey.[25]

Practical Applications of Incarnational Mission in Young Adult Ministry Community Involvement and Service

One practical expression of incarnational mission at Daniel Chapel could be young adult involvement in community service. By organizing service opportunities that meet local needs, such as volunteering at food banks, participating in environmental clean-ups, or partnering with organizations that assist marginalized populations, young

[25] M. Robert Mulholland, *Invitation to a Journey: A Road Map for Spiritual Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 1993), 34.

adults can witness the Gospel in action. These service activities enable young adults to see the Church actively embodying Christ's compassion, serving as a powerful testimony of faith in action. Furthermore, such activities resonate with the social consciousness of many young adults, who wish to contribute positively to their communities.[26]

Shared Experiences and Life-on-Life Mentorship

Incarnational mission flourishes in discipleship models that encompass shared life experiences. Instead of a top-down approach to teaching, life-on-life mentorship invites young adults into the everyday lives of their mentors, allowing them to witness faith in action. Mentors at Daniel Chapel can engage young adults in their daily routines, inviting them to share meals, hobbies, or family events. This fosters an environment where discipleship is experienced as a natural, relational process rather than a formal program, deepening the connection between mentors and mentees and demonstrating how faith integrates into all aspects of life.[27]

Presence in Social and Digital Spaces

Given the prevalence of digital platforms in the lives of young adults, the incarnational mission at Daniel Chapel could extend into social and digital spaces. Leaders and mentors can interact with young adults through social media, online discussions, and virtual small groups, using these platforms as venues for relational connections. A digital presence enables ministry leaders to remain accessible, particularly

[26] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 213.

[27] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 213.

when physical proximity is not possible, and to address young adults' questions and concerns in real-time. By thoughtfully utilizing digital spaces, the church can maintain a consistent incarnational presence, showing that discipleship and community transcend physical boundaries.[28]

Challenges and Strategies for Incarnational Ministry

Implementing an incarnational approach to ministry presents certain challenges, including time investment, emotional demands, and the need to maintain healthy boundaries. Authentic relationships require a significant commitment and energy, so leaders must be prepared to invest in young adults' lives while also recognizing their own limitations. Training leaders to balance relational engagement with self-care is essential for sustainable incarnational ministry.

One effective strategy is to promote a team-based approach to discipleship, where multiple leaders and mentors share the responsibilities of building relationships with young adults. This approach prevents burnout, allowing leaders to support one another and rotate tasks, ensuring that each mentor has the resources and encouragement they require. Leaders can also benefit from regular debriefing sessions, during which they share experiences, seek advice, and process challenges in a supportive environment. This practice fosters resilience, enabling leaders to stay emotionally present for young adults while maintaining a sustainable level of personal well-being.[29]

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[28] Clark and Powell, *Sticky Faith*, 92.

[29] Timothy Keller, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York, NY: Dutton, 2012), 62.

Another challenge involves navigating the boundaries between mentorship and friendship. While incarnational ministry encourages close relationships, leaders must maintain a clear understanding of their role to avoid dependency or the blurring of relational dynamics. Training on how to set and maintain healthy boundaries can be incorporated into leadership development, equipping leaders to cultivate strong yet appropriate relationships with young adults. These boundaries ensure that the mentor-mentee relationship remains balanced, respectful, and conducive to growth, ultimately enhancing the ministry's effectiveness.[30]

Long-Term Impact of Incarnational Mission on Young Adult Discipleship

When young adults engage in discipleship through an incarnational model, they are more likely to feel valued, understood, and connected to the church. This approach nurtures a sense of belonging, as young adults recognize that their spiritual journey is supported by a network of genuine relationships rather than impersonal programs. By fostering an environment of authentic connection, Daniel Chapel can develop a young adult ministry where individuals feel empowered to explore their faith, participate in meaningful service, and pursue lifelong discipleship.

Additionally, incarnational mission has the potential to create ripple effects within the broader church community. As young adults engage with and respond to this relational approach, they become agents of incarnational mission within their own spheres of influence. By embodying Christ’s love, compassion, and presence, young

[30] Benner, *The Gift of Being Yourself*, 41.

adults can broaden the Gospel's impact in their workplaces, social circles, and families, advancing the Church's mission in the world.

In conclusion, incarnational mission provides a transformative approach to young adult discipleship that resonates deeply with the relational and experiential needs of today's generation. Through intentional presence, shared experiences, and authentic mentorship, Daniel Chapel can cultivate a young adult ministry that embodies the Gospel in both word and action. This method not only addresses the issue of disengagement but also establishes a sustainable model for discipleship that equips young adults to live out their faith both within and beyond the walls of the church.

Conclusion: A Missiological Approach to Young Adult Discipleship

The challenge of discipling young adults at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church requires a theologically sound, contextually relevant, and practically effective framework. Through an examination of the Missio Dei, contextualization, and incarnational ministry, this project has outlined a strategy that not only addresses the immediate issue of disengagement among young adults but also provides a sustainable model for discipleship that is deeply rooted in missiological principles. By integrating these key elements, Daniel Chapel can transcend traditional retention strategies and cultivate a thriving young adult ministry that promotes spiritual maturity, community engagement, and mission-driven leadership.

The Missio Dei as the Foundation for Discipleship

At the heart of this framework is the Missio Dei, the understanding that discipleship involves not just bringing young adults into the church but inviting them into God's ongoing mission in the world. The Church does not own the mission; instead, it participates in God's redemptive work, aligning its discipleship efforts with His overarching purpose. These Theological Foundations are rooted in the biblical narrative, where God's mission unfolds from the covenant with Abraham in Genesis to the Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20, commanding believers to go into the world and make disciples of all nations.[31]

The Missio Dei powerfully corrects the notion that discipleship is merely about personal spiritual growth. Instead, it frames discipleship as an outward movement, calling young adults to see their faith as something that actively transforms their lives and the world around them.[32] By incorporating the Missio Dei into discipleship training, ministry leaders can help young adults recognize their roles as active participants in God's work, instilling a sense of purpose and engagement that moves beyond passive church attendance.[33]

Contextualization as a Strategy for Relevance and Engagement

One of the biggest barriers to young adult discipleship is the belief that the Church is out of touch with the realities of modern life. Contextualization bridges this

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[31] Wright, *The Mission of God*, 213.

[32] Bosch, *Transforming the Mission*, 368.

[33] Guder, ed., *Missional Church,* 10.

gap by ensuring that the Gospel is communicated and lived out in ways that resonate with young adults' experiences, values, and challenges.[34] This concept is clear in Paul's approach in 1 Corinthians 9:22, where he says, "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." Paul's readiness to adapt to his audience serves as a model for the contemporary Church's need to engage young adults in ways that are culturally relevant and meaningful.[35]

At Daniel Chapel, contextualization involves creating discipleship spaces where young adults feel heard, understood, and valued. This requires ministry leaders to engage in active listening, comprehend the struggles and aspirations of young adults, and incorporate those insights into their discipleship practices.[36] This may include addressing topics such as social justice, mental health, career development, and relationships within a biblical framework, demonstrating that faith is relevant to every aspect of life.[37] By embracing contextualization, the church can eliminate unnecessary barriers to discipleship and foster an environment where young adults can explore their faith in meaningful and transformative ways.[38]

Incarnational Ministry as a Model for Discipleship

While contextualization ensures that discipleship remains relevant, incarnational ministry guarantees that it is relational. The model of Jesus, who lived among and deeply

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[34] Hunsberger and Gelder, *The Church Between Gospel and Culture,* 226.

[35] White, *The Church and the Community*, 132.

[36] Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology*, 32.

[37] Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*, 87.

[38] Kinnaman and Hawkins, *You Lost Me*, 56.

engaged with the people He aimed to disciple, offers a powerful template for young adult ministry. John 1:14 states that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us," highlighting the importance of presence and relationships in ministry.[39] An incarnational approach shifts discipleship from formal programs to life-on-life mentorship, where ministry leaders and mature believers actively cultivate relationships with young adults.[40]

For Daniel Chapel, this involves transitioning from an event-based discipleship model to one that emphasizes genuine relationships and shared experiences. Young adults are more likely to stay engaged in the church when they have deep, meaningful connections with mentors who support them in their spiritual journeys.[41] This could include small group gatherings, one-on-one mentorship, and community involvement where faith is expressed through everyday interactions.[42] By embodying the love of Christ in practical, relational ways, the Church can foster a discipleship culture that is authentic, enduring, and profoundly transformative.[43]

Conclusion: A Path Forward for Young Adult Discipleship

The combined impact of the Missio Dei, contextualization, and incarnational ministry offers a comprehensive framework for young adult discipleship at Daniel Chapel. The Missio Dei shifts the focus from institutional retention to mission-driven engagement, contextualization ensures that discipleship remains relevant to young adults'

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[39] Powell, Mulder, and Griffin, *Growing Young*, 112.

[40] Dean, *Almost Christian*, 68.

[41] Frost and Hirsch, *The Shaping of Things to Come*, 35.

[42] Clark, *Adoptive Youth Ministry*, 112.

[43] Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion*, 67.

lived experiences, and incarnational ministry cultivates the relationships necessary for deep, lasting faith formation. Together, these elements provide a holistic approach that moves beyond traditional discipleship models to one that genuinely meets young adults where they are and invites them into a dynamic, mission-focused faith journey.[44]

Moving forward, Daniel Chapel must prioritize training its ministry leaders in these missiological principles to ensure they are equipped to disciple young adults in ways that are theologically grounded, culturally aware, and relationally intentional.[45] Moreover, ongoing assessment and adaptation will be necessary to refine discipleship strategies based on the evolving needs and concerns of young adults.[46] By embracing this framework, Daniel Chapel has the opportunity to not only address the current issue of young adult disengagement but also to cultivate a thriving, mission-oriented young adult ministry that strengthens both individuals and the broader church community.[47]

Ultimately, young adult discipleship is not just about keeping young adults in the pews; it is about empowering them to live as fully engaged, mission-driven disciples of Christ. By embracing the principles outlined in this study, Daniel Chapel can create a discipleship model that encourages lifelong faith, fosters deep community, and promotes active participation in God's redemptive mission. This is the vision of *Unarrested Development: A Framework* where young adults are not stagnant in their spiritual growth

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[44] Stetzer and Nation, *Compelled*, 56.

[45] Keller, *Every Good Endeavor*, 85.

[46] Craig Van Gelder, *The Essence of the Church: A Community Created by the Spirit* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 67.

[47] Alan J. Roxburgh and Fred Romanuk, *The Missional Leader: Equipping Your Church to Reach a Changing World* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006), 102.

but are continually evolving, thriving, and advancing in their faith, ready to transform both the Church and the world around them.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

Discipling young adults presents one of the most pressing challenges for churches today, especially in settings where engagement with this demographic has declined. At Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, the lack of a structured, purposeful ministry for young adults has created a disconnect between the church and this essential segment of its congregation. The ineffective discipleship of young adults not only hinders their personal spiritual growth but also impacts the vitality and longevity of the church itself. To address this issue, an interdisciplinary approach to discipleship is needed, one that utilizes Transformational Leadership Theory, which combines leadership practices, psychology, and spiritual development. By comprehending the implications of this theory in the context of young adult discipleship, church leaders can better meet the needs of this demographic, fostering an environment that promotes spiritual maturity and a lasting commitment to the faith.

The Interdisciplinary Nature of Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational Leadership Theory, initially introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978 and later expanded by Bernard M. Bass in the 1980s, emphasizes the significance of leaders who inspire, challenge, and motivate their followers to achieve

their fullest potential, both personally and spiritually. This theory, which draws from various disciplines such as leadership studies, psychology, and organizational behavior, centers on four core components: inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and idealized influence. These components offer an effective framework for church leaders in the realm of young adult discipleship, as they can be leveraged to foster a ministry that promotes growth, critical thinking, and commitment to the church's mission.[1]

Incorporating this theory into a ministry for young adults would require leaders to move beyond traditional, one-size-fits-all discipleship programs and adopt a personalized, relational approach. This interdisciplinary framework blends leadership principles with psychological understanding, providing a model for how leaders can inspire transformation and deep, lasting spiritual growth among young adults. As a result, the use of Transformational Leadership Theory holds significant promise for addressing the problem of ineffective discipleship at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church.

The Rationale for Focusing on Transformational Leadership in Discipleship

Focusing on Transformational Leadership Theory offers several key advantages when addressing the needs of young adults in a discipleship context. First and foremost, this theory emphasizes the importance of relationship-building and personalized care. Young adults often seek more than mere doctrinal instruction; they crave authentic, meaningful connections with spiritual leaders who demonstrate a genuine interest in their personal and spiritual development. By employing individualized consideration, ministry

[1] James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1978), 4.

leaders can offer tailored guidance that meets the unique needs of each young adult, fostering trust and engagement within the ministry.[2]

Additionally, the emphasis of Transformational Leadership on intellectual stimulation is especially significant for young adults, many of whom are grappling with complex questions about their faith, purpose, and the world around them. This group is in a crucial stage of intellectual and emotional development, where they seek answers to inquiries that extend beyond the basic teachings of the church. Leaders who apply this aspect of Transformational Leadership inspire young adults to think critically, reflect on their beliefs, and engage deeply with scripture and church teachings, creating an environment of ongoing learning and growth.[3]

Another vital aspect of Transformational Leadership that resonates with young adults' needs is inspirational motivation. Many young adults in today's culture encounter numerous distractions, challenges, and pressures that can diminish their commitment to the church. Often, they feel disillusioned or disconnected from traditional forms of religious expression. By presenting a compelling vision for the future, leaders can motivate young adults to recognize their potential within the broader context of God's kingdom. This vision, when communicated effectively, acts as a powerful source of motivation, encouraging young adults to engage actively in the church's life and pursue their spiritual growth with enthusiasm and purpose.[4]

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[2] Bernard M. Bass, *Transformational Leadership: Industrial, Military, and Educational Impact* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998), 3.

[3] Bass, *Transformational Leadership,* 25.

[4] Burns, *Leadership,* 36.

Finally, Transformational Leadership emphasizes the role of leaders as moral exemplars through idealized influence. In the context of discipleship, young adults look to church leaders not only for guidance but also as models of spiritual integrity. The authenticity of a leader's walk with God can significantly impact the willingness of young adults to engage in discipleship. When ministry leaders exemplify the values they teach, they not only earn the respect of their followers but also encourage them to embody those same values in their own lives. This fosters a culture of spiritual mentorship and accountability, which are key elements in effective discipleship.[5]

Impact on Young Adult Discipleship at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church

The application of Transformational Leadership Theory to young adult discipleship at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church has the potential to inspire significant change. The issue at hand is not just a lack of programming, but rather a failure to connect with young adults on a deeper, more meaningful level. If ministry leaders at Daniel Chapel engage in training on transformational leadership and discipleship, they will gain the tools necessary to build a young adult ministry that is dynamic, relational, and spiritually enriching. This training would equip leaders to understand the unique needs and challenges that young adults face and to provide a ministry that addresses these issues with creativity and compassion.

Furthermore, implementing Transformational Leadership within the discipleship process could foster a sustainable, long-term investment in the spiritual development of

[5] Bass, *Transformational Leadership*, 72.

young adults.[6] As leaders create a more engaging and personalized ministry, young adults will be more likely to connect with the church, not just as attendees, but as active participants in the faith community. Through this approach, young adults will be better equipped to navigate the challenges of modern life while remaining grounded in their faith, leading to the flourishing of both the individuals and the church as a whole.

Transformational Leadership Theory provides an effective, interdisciplinary framework for addressing the discipleship needs of young adults at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. By prioritizing relationship-building, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and moral leadership, ministry leaders can establish a dynamic environment for young adults to grow both spiritually and personally.[7] As leaders utilize the tools offered by Transformational Leadership, they will be empowered to develop a young adult ministry that not only meets the immediate needs of this demographic but also promotes long-term spiritual growth, ensuring the church's continued vitality in the years ahead.

Theological Foundation: Transformational Leadership and the Missio Dei

The Missio Dei, or "Mission of God," is a central theological theme that forms the foundation for understanding God's ongoing redemptive work in the world. The Missio Dei teaches that God, through Christ, is reconciling the world to Himself, and the Church is invited to engage in this divine mission of restoration and renewal. This missional

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[6] Jay A. Conger and Ben E. Kanungo, *Charismatic Leadership in Organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998).

[7] Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 8th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018).

approach extends beyond the Church's walls, involving not only proclamation but also transformation within the larger society.[8] Theologically, the Missio Dei encompasses various facets: the proclamation of the Gospel, the demonstration of justice, mercy, and peace, and the nurturing of believers to become active participants in the Mission of God.[9]

In the context of young adult discipleship, transformational leadership provides a powerful perspective through which the Missio Dei can be enacted more effectively. Transformational leadership emphasizes empowering followers to realize their full potential, not merely in terms of personal achievement but also as agents of God's kingdom. Leaders who embrace transformational leadership do not simply manage or direct; they inspire, challenge, and empower those they lead to engage in God's mission.[10] This aligns perfectly with the Missio Dei's aim of equipping every believer to contribute to God's ongoing redemptive work. The focus of leadership is not on cultivating followers, but on developing leaders capable of continuing the work of ministry through their own initiative and engagement.

A key principle of transformational leadership is visionary leadership; casting a clear and compelling vision that inspires followers. In relation to the Missio Dei, transformational leadership encourages leaders to communicate a vision of God's mission that is not only inwardly focused but also empowers young adults to see their role in transforming the world. Transformational leaders motivate followers by helping them

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[8] Edgar H. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2017).

[9] Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 36.

[10] John P. Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston, MA: Harvard Business Review Press, 1996).

understand how their individual lives fit into the broader narrative of God's mission, whether through social action, community engagement, or personal spiritual growth. In this way, young adults are not passive recipients of spiritual formation but active participants who grasp their role in fulfilling the Missio Dei.

One of the most profound ways transformational leadership intersects with the Missio Dei is through the concept of empowerment. Transformational leaders equip others, providing them with the skills, confidence, and authority to engage in God's mission.[11] This is especially important for young adults, who are at a pivotal stage of life where they explore their identity and role in the world. Transformational leadership challenges leaders to empower young adults to take ownership of their discipleship, offering the tools and guidance they need to make a significant impact for God's kingdom.

Theologically, this type of empowerment is critical because it reflects God's work in creation and redemption: He empowers humanity to fulfill the divine purpose. Genesis 1:28 speaks of God granting humanity dominion over the earth, establishing a kind of empowering partnership in creation. Similarly, transformational leadership encourages young adults to view themselves as partners in God's redemptive work on earth, continuing His mission of reconciliation, justice, and peace. Transformational leadership inspires young adults to embrace this mission as an integral part of their faith journey, not as a distant or abstract concept but as a lived reality.

[11] Donna Ladkin, *The Philosophy of Leadership* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2010).

How Transformational Leadership Shapes This Theological Foundation

Transformational leadership also informs the local church's role in fulfilling the Missio Dei. Theologically, the church is called to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world, and transformational leadership supports this calling by emphasizing the empowerment of believers.[12] While traditional church structures may focus on a top-down approach to ministry, transformational leadership promotes a bottom-up engagement model, in which leaders empower every believer, particularly young adults, to participate in the mission. This can take the form of training, mentorship, and opportunities for them to lead within the church and in the broader community. Transformational leadership shifts the perspective from church members being recipients of ministry to becoming active agents equipped to lead the Mission of God.

Through transformational leadership, young adults are encouraged to view their faith through a missional lens, which profoundly changes how they perceive their everyday lives. Whether they are students, employees, or volunteers, transformational leadership inspires young adults to serve as ambassadors of Christ, engaging in the broader work of God's kingdom. In this regard, transformational leadership not only informs their understanding of ministry but also fundamentally shapes their identity as individuals sent into the world with purpose.

Transformational leadership also fosters the development of visionary leadership, individuals who can articulate a compelling and inspiring vision of God's mission. This aligns with the theological perspective that the Church is meant to be a witness to the

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[12] Peter Block, *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1987).

Kingdom of God, urging young adults to actively participate in ministry both within and beyond the church walls.

Through transformational leadership, young adults are encouraged to view their faith through a missional lens, which profoundly changes how they perceive their everyday lives. Whether they are students, employees, or volunteers, transformational leadership inspires young adults to serve as ambassadors of Christ, engaging in the broader work of God's kingdom. In this regard, transformational leadership not only informs their understanding of ministry but also fundamentally shapes their identity as individuals sent into the world with purpose.

An essential takeaway from transformational leadership in relation to the Missio Dei is that leadership is not just about teaching or managing but about developing leaders who will continue the work of God's mission. Through transformational leadership, leaders cultivate a culture where young adults are not simply taught but are empowered to lead.[13] This transformative process involves relationship-building, vision-casting, and ongoing support, all of which are essential components for nurturing a generation of young adults who are committed to the Mission of God and are equipped to take on leadership roles in the church and beyond.[14]

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[13] Robert L. Lamb, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler, 2008).

[14] Bass, *Transformational Leadership*, 3.

Biblical Foundation: Transformational Leadership's Interaction with the Gospel's Call to Discipleship

The Bible presents a compelling model of leadership that aligns with the principles of Transformational Leadership, particularly in the call to discipleship. One of the most profound biblical accounts of discipleship is found in Mark 3:13-19, where Jesus calls His disciples to be with Him, learn from Him, and then be sent out into the world. This passage highlights two core components of discipleship: relational discipleship and missional discipleship. Jesus' approach to discipleship was not merely a one-way transmission of knowledge but an invitation into a transformative relationship that empowered the disciples to continue His work in the world. Transformational leadership mirrors this concept by emphasizing the relational aspect of leadership, leaders who build personal connections with their followers to inspire and challenge them (Mk. 3:13-19).

Jesus exemplified mentorship as a key aspect of His leadership. He spent significant time with His disciples, teaching them, guiding them, and modeling for them the behaviors and attitudes of the Kingdom of God. This was not a casual form of teaching; it was a deep, intentional process of personal development. Transformational leadership aligns with this model by emphasizing the importance of individualized consideration; understanding the unique needs and potential of each individual and guiding them through a personalized growth process.[15] Just as Jesus mentored His disciples, transformational leadership take time to understand the challenges and needs of

[15] Lynda Gratton and Adrian Johnson, *The Three-Dimensional Leader: Focus, Act, and Engage* (London, UK: Financial Times/Prentice Hall, 2007).

the young adults they mentor, providing personalized guidance to help them grow spiritually, emotionally, and mentally.

One of the key components of discipleship in the Bible is empowerment, which is also central to transformational leadership. After calling His disciples, Jesus empowered them to act on His behalf. He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom, heal the sick, and cast out demons, giving them the authority to act. Transformational leadership similarly emphasizes empowerment; equipping followers to lead and act on the shared vision. For young adults, empowerment means providing the confidence, tools, and authority to lead within the church, serve in the community, and continue God's work in the world.

The second aspect of Jesus' discipleship involved sending the disciples out to continue His work. After spending time with them, teaching them, and empowering them, Jesus sent the disciples into the world to fulfill God's mission. Transformational leadership corresponds with this missional focus by encouraging leaders not only to teach and inspire followers but also to send them out to lead on their own. Young adults need to recognize that discipleship is not solely about personal growth but also about developing leadership; becoming equipped to lead and make a difference in the world.

Jesus' command to go and make disciples underscores the leadership responsibility of every disciple. In the context of transformational leadership, this means that leaders are not simply molding followers but are raising up future leaders. Transformational leadership encourages leaders to invest in young adults in ways that prepare them to lead, empower others, and serve in various capacities within the church and the broader community. Transformational leadership focuses on intellectual stimulation and challenges young adults to think critically about their faith, to engage

deeply with scripture, and to live out the call of discipleship in their personal and professional lives.[16]

How Transformational Leadership Shapes My Biblical Foundation

The principle of individualized consideration in transformational leadership aligns with the relational aspect of discipleship emphasized in the Gospel. Jesus' calling of the twelve disciples was profoundly personal. He selected them specifically and devoted time to mentoring them, cultivating meaningful relationships. Transformational leadership encourages leaders to engage similarly with young adults; taking the time to understand their unique needs, offering guidance, and facilitating their spiritual growth. Transformational leadership also urges ministry leaders to embrace the role of mentor, rather than merely being a teacher, by nurturing relationships that are deeply formative and transformative.

Furthermore, Jesus' sending of the disciples serves as a powerful example of empowerment. He sends them out with the authority to carry out the work of the Kingdom. Transformational leadership highlights this aspect of empowerment, where leaders are not just educators but also those who equip their followers to lead. Transformational leadership prompts leaders to view their role as empowering young adults to take ownership of their faith, leadership, and ministry.

By incorporating transformational leadership into this biblical model of discipleship, leaders can help young adults understand that they are not merely recipients

[16] John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*, W. Reginald Ward, ed. (London, UK: Epworth Press, 1960), 120.

of teaching but active participants in God's redemptive work. One of the key insights from transformational leadership concerning the biblical understanding of discipleship is that it revolves around empowering others for leadership. Jesus not only called his disciples to follow him but also sent them out to lead others. Transformational leadership further refines this by emphasizing that leaders must actively empower and equip their followers, especially young adults, to step into leadership roles. Thus, discipleship is not solely about learning but about becoming leaders who continue the work of Jesus in the world.[17]

Historical Foundation: Wesley's Leadership and Empowerment of Lay Leaders

John Wesley's approach to discipleship and leadership offers a foundational historical framework for understanding the application of transformational leadership in young adult ministry today. Wesley's methods, especially his emphasis on small group discipleship and the empowerment of lay leaders, align closely with the principles of transformational leadership. His system of small groups, classes, bands, and societies, was crafted to provide mutual support and accountability, fostering an environment where individuals were mentored, challenged, and encouraged in their spiritual growth. This approach resonates with the relational aspect of transformational leadership, in which leaders cultivate close, personal relationships with their followers to promote growth and transformation.

Wesley's use of lay preachers was a groundbreaking element of his leadership model. He believed that all believers could preach and lead others in ministry, regardless

[17] Bass, *Transformational Leadership,* 45.

of their formal education or ordination. This practice closely aligns with the transformational leadership emphasis on empowering others to lead. Wesley's vision of leadership was not limited to clergy alone; it represented a shared leadership model that involved encouraging others to take responsibility and lead in various capacities.

Wesley's Legacy of Empowerment

Wesley's emphasis on lay leadership reflects the belief in empowerment inherent in transformational leadership. Transformational leadership encourages leaders to delegate authority and equip others with the necessary tools and opportunities to lead. Just as Wesley empowered lay individuals to serve as preachers and leaders, transformational leadership fosters young adults in taking on significant roles within both the church and the community. Moreover, Wesley's focus on accountability in small groups aligns with transformational leadership's principle of individualized consideration, where leaders customize their guidance to address the needs of each person.

One of Wesley's most significant contributions to church history was his focus on holiness and spiritual formation. He believed that every believer had the capacity to grow in grace and contribute to God's work. Transformational leadership extends this understanding by emphasizing that leadership development is a holistic process involving the development of character, intellect, and spiritual maturity.[18]

[18] Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley*, 120.

Insights Gained from Wesley's Leadership

Transformational leadership, derived from Wesley's leadership, provides the insight that leadership is a shared responsibility. Young adults are not passive recipients of teaching but co-laborers in God's work. Transformational leadership encourages leaders to cultivate a culture where young adults are empowered to lead, not just to follow. This historical precedent shows that when leaders empower others, especially young adults, they not only build up the individual but also strengthen the entire church community.[19]

Practical Applications: How Transformational Leadership Impacts Young Adult Discipleship

Transformational leadership offers a practical framework for cultivating a young adult ministry that is not only spiritually enriching but also actively empowers young adults to embrace leadership roles. There are practical applications of transformational leadership principles that can be applied in the young adult ministry at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. Mentorship and relational leadership are where ministry leaders must focus on building deep personal relationships with young adults, taking the time to understand their needs and helping them grow spiritually and personally. Creating a Vision for Ministry is a ministry where leaders create a compelling vision that inspires young adults to see their role in God's mission and empowers them to act on it. Building Community through Small Groups is when transformational leadership emphasizes the importance of accountability and community. Small groups should be used to provide a

[19] Bass, *Transformational Leadership,* 45.

supportive environment where young adults can grow in their faith, ask difficult questions, and serve together in ministry. Empowering Young Adults for Leadership is when leaders intentionally empower young adults to lead within the church. This could include taking roles in worship, teaching, or community outreach. Intellectual Stimulation and Critical Thinking are when transformational leadership encourages leaders to create an environment where young adults can think critically about their faith, ask questions, and engage deeply with scripture.

How Transformational Leadership Shapes My Understanding of the Project

Transformational leadership provides the lens through which to understand the goal of young adult discipleship as not just spiritual formation but also leadership development. Young adults are not just being disciplined; they are being equipped to lead and serve in the church. Transformational leadership transforms the way we view young adults, not as passive recipients but as active contributors to the work of God's kingdom.[20]

The integration of transformational leadership with the theological, biblical, and historical foundations of this project encourages a holistic approach to discipleship. Through the lens of transformational leadership, discipleship becomes an active, transformative process in which young adults grow spiritually, develop leadership skills, and meaningfully engage with the world around them.

[20] C. Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1993), 55.

Conclusion: Transformational Leadership as a Framework for Young Adult Discipleship

The integration of Transformational Leadership Theory into young adult discipleship provides a comprehensive and compelling framework for addressing the challenges of engaging this essential demographic within the church. In this paper, we explore how transformational leadership, when applied to the church's ministry for young adults, empowers both leaders and followers to establish a dynamic and sustainable model of discipleship that not only fosters individual spiritual growth but also prepares young adults for leadership roles within the church and beyond.

At the heart of transformational leadership is the belief that leaders are not just administrators or managers; they are individuals who inspire, motivate, and challenge those they lead to achieve their full potential. This is especially important when working with young adults who often feel disillusioned by the church, disconnected from traditional ministry practices, or uncertain about their role in the church's broader mission. Transformational leadership emphasizes empowerment, visionary guidance, and personalized mentorship, all essential for mentoring young adults navigating the complexities of life in an increasingly secular and diverse world.

Transformational Leadership and the Missio Dei: A Vision for Young Adult Discipleship

The Missio Dei, or the Mission of God, serves as the foundational theological concept for any approach to discipleship. It reminds us that the Church is not merely a gathering of believers but an active, dynamic participant in God's ongoing redemptive work in the world. This understanding of the Missio Dei aligns perfectly with Transformational Leadership Theory, which encourages leaders to inspire their followers

to become co-laborers in God's mission. The Church's mission is not just to create followers but to equip leaders who can step into the world and make a tangible impact for the Kingdom of God.

Transformational leadership fits naturally into this theological framework by emphasizing relational discipleship and missionary leadership. Just as Jesus called His disciples to be with Him, learn from Him, and then be sent out on mission, transformational leadership encourages leaders to invest in young adults relationally, empowering them intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, and sending them out with a sense of purpose and direction. The model of transformational leadership fosters a culture where young adults are not just taught but developed into leaders who actively engage in the work of God's kingdom in their personal lives, communities, and professional spheres. This approach to equipping leaders instead of merely creating followers provides young adults with a profound sense of purpose and ownership in God's work, making their discipleship journey both transformative and mission-driven.

The theological implications of transformational leadership within the Missio Dei are profound. It challenges the traditional view of discipleship as a one-way flow of information from leader to follower, suggesting instead that discipleship is a mutual process in which both the leader and the follower are shaped by their interactions. In this model, young adults are recognized not only as future leaders but also as current contributors to God's mission. Their spiritual formation becomes an active engagement with the world around them, empowering them to embody God's love, justice, and mercy wherever they may go. This model of empowerment is transformative not only for young

adults but also for the church as a whole, fostering a vibrant, active community of believers committed to making a difference in the world.

Transformational Leadership and the Biblical Call to Discipleship: Building Leaders for the Future

The Biblical Foundations for Transformational Leadership is exemplified by the way Jesus modeled leadership for His disciples. In Mark 3:13-19, Jesus calls His disciples to be with Him, to learn from Him, and then to go out on mission. This approach to discipleship, centered on both relational intimacy and missional engagement, resonates deeply with the principles of transformational leadership, such as individualized consideration and empowerment. Jesus did not just teach His disciples; He invested in them, mentored them, and empowered them to lead others.

For young adults, this model of discipleship is particularly relevant. They are at a stage in life where they are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood, grappling with questions of identity, purpose, and calling. Transformational leaders, who embody Christ's example, prioritize building genuine relationships with young adults, understanding their unique challenges, and offering personalized support that enables them to grow into the leaders they are meant to be. Transformational leadership emphasizes visionary leadership, where leaders help young adults view their lives within the broader context of God's redemptive work. It encourages them to think critically about their faith, their role in God's mission, and how they can contribute to the flourishing of the church and the world.

This emphasis on empowerment within transformational leadership aligns seamlessly with the biblical call for believers to make disciples and guide others to Christ. Jesus empowered His disciples with authority to heal, preach, and cast out demons, illustrating that genuine discipleship encompasses more than individual growth. It requires action and service to the world. In the same vein, transformational leadership inspires leaders to help young adults recognize that their discipleship is not solely for their own advantage but also for the benefit of others. It urges them to serve and lead, making disciples of all nations and engaging in God's mission to redeem the world.

Transformational Leadership and the Historical Legacy of Wesleyan Leadership

Examining the historical foundations of leadership, John Wesley's model offers a valuable context for understanding how transformational leadership can be applied in contemporary discipleship. Wesley's approach emphasized the creation of small groups, lay leadership, and personal holiness. This discipleship system was designed to empower believers, especially laypeople, to actively participate in the church's ministry. His small group structure held individuals accountable for their spiritual growth while providing opportunities to serve and lead, reflecting transformational leadership's focus on relational engagement and leadership development.

Wesley's use of lay preachers was a revolutionary idea that challenged traditional church hierarchy. He recognized that ordinary believers, particularly young adults, had the potential to lead and contribute to the work of God. Transformational leadership takes this principle further by emphasizing that leadership is not an exclusive privilege of a

select few but a shared responsibility that belongs to every believer. Transformational leadership encourages ministry leaders to empower young adults to step into leadership roles in the church, whether through preaching, teaching, or leading small groups. This model fosters a culture where young adults are not just consumers of ministry but co-creators of the church's mission.

Wesley's commitment to holiness and personal transformation is also reflected in transformational leadership's emphasis on personalized leadership development. Transformational leaders guide young adults in developing their character, spiritual maturity, and leadership skills, like how Wesley aimed to cultivate holiness in the lives of those he mentored. Through transformational leadership, young adults are equipped not only for ministry but also for personal and professional leadership, preparing them to lead in every aspect of life.

Practical Implications of Transformational Leadership for Young Adult Discipleship at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church

Applying transformational leadership principles to young adult discipleship at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church presents several practical implications for the future of ministry. By incorporating transformational leadership into the church's current structures, leaders can develop a discipleship model that focuses on mentorship, empowerment, and leadership growth.

First, ministry leaders can cultivate a relational environment where young adults feel valued and understood. This relational aspect of leadership is essential for engaging young adults, many of whom may feel disconnected from traditional ministry structures.

Leaders can dedicate time to one-on-one mentoring relationships, guiding young adults through their spiritual journeys and empowering them to assume leadership roles within the church.

Second, visionary leadership is vital for inspiring young adults to engage with God's mission. Leaders must share a clear and compelling vision that motivates young adults to express their faith in impactful ways. This vision should be anchored in scripture and connected to the broader mission of the church, reminding young adults that their lives hold purpose and that they are called to make a difference in the world.

Ultimately, church leaders should focus on developing leadership within the young adult ministry. This includes offering opportunities for young adults to engage in various roles, whether in small groups, community outreach, or leadership positions within the church. By empowering young adults to assume leadership roles, transformational leadership not only contributes to building the church but also prepares the next generation of leaders who will continue the work of God's kingdom.

The Future of Young Adult Ministry: Empowered, Equipped, and Engaged

Looking ahead, the future of young adult ministry at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church will be both empowered and equipped. Through the principles of Transformational Leadership, young adults will not only be discipled but also developed into leaders who actively contribute to the church's life. This approach to discipleship will cultivate a culture where young adults are engaged, motivated, and empowered to take ownership of their faith and ministry. Transformational leadership provides the

framework for the church to establish a vibrant, sustainable, and leadership-driven ministry that continues to grow and transform the lives of young adults.

In conclusion, Transformational Leadership Theory provides a dynamic and powerful approach to tackling the challenges of young adult discipleship. By embracing the principles of transformational leadership, church leaders at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church can empower young adults to become the leaders they are called to be; spiritually mature, engaged, and active participants in God's mission to redeem the world. Through mentorship, visionary leadership, and leadership development, young adults will be equipped to serve, lead, and make a lasting impact for the Kingdom of God.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

This final project represents the culmination of my Doctor of Ministry journey and serves as the living expression of how my academic, theological, and ministerial formation came together in one practical endeavor. The project was not simply a classroom exercise but the natural outgrowth of what I have learned, reflected upon, and implemented throughout this program. Each foundation, biblical, theological, historical, and interdisciplinary, shaped the vision, structure, and purpose of the leadership training I conducted at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. The process moved my ministry from theory to transformation, creating a bridge between scholarship and practice that continues to bear fruit in the life of the church.

The problem that guided this project was clear: Daniel Chapel was not discipling its young adults. While young adults were present in worship, they were not being intentionally formed in faith or developed as leaders within the body. This realization became the catalyst for the project's focus and purpose. I proposed that if ministry leaders participated in a structured training on how to disciple young adults, then they would become equipped to begin developing a young adult ministry designed to meet that need. This hypothesis reflected both a theological conviction and a pastoral urgency,

believing that the health of any congregation depends on its ability to disciple the next generation.

The project did not emerge in isolation. It was informed by the synergy between my spiritual journey and the ministry context in which I serve. Each of the foundational studies contributed something vital to its design and implementation. The Biblical Foundations, rooted in Mark 3:13-19, provided the framework for understanding discipleship as an intentional and relational process. Jesus called the twelve disciples not merely to perform tasks but to be "with Him" before being sent out. That sequence, which I recognize as calling, connection, and commissioning, became the model for the seven-week leadership training. The sessions invited participants to deepen their relationship with Christ, connect meaningfully with others, and prepare to engage in active ministry with and for young adults. In essence, this biblical model grounded the project in the life and ministry of Jesus Himself.

The Theological Foundations extended that scriptural model by emphasizing the concept of Missio Dei, the Mission of God. Discipleship, in this sense, is not confined to the church walls but is part of God's ongoing mission in the world. The training helped participants see that young adult ministry is not about retaining attendance but about releasing disciples into purposeful living. When ministry leaders began to view their work as a shared participation in God's redemptive plan, they became more open to innovation, collaboration, and the empowerment of younger voices. This shift was particularly evident during Week Four of the training, when participants reflected on how Jesus 'model of sending His followers can inform their call to equip and release others in their own contexts.

The Historical Foundation provided structure and depth to the training model by drawing on John Wesley's methodical system of discipleship. Wesley's use of class and band meetings demonstrated that spiritual growth occurs most effectively in accountable, relational environments. His emphasis on lay empowerment affirmed that effective ministry depends not on the clergy alone but on the active involvement of all believers. This insight directly influenced how I structured the training sessions at Daniel Chapel, favoring discussion, reflection, and group participation over lecture-style instruction. It also inspired me to help participants view themselves as spiritual mentors who could lead by example, fostering a culture of shared leadership and spiritual accountability within the congregation.

The Interdisciplinary Foundations, grounded in Transformational Leadership Theory, served as a bridge between faith formation and human development. This framework emphasized that leadership is not about authority or position but about influence, inspiration, and transformation. Throughout the training, ministry leaders were challenged to see themselves as catalysts for change, capable of motivating others through integrity, empathy, and vision. The focus on emotional intelligence, mentorship, and personal growth helped participants recognize that spiritual leadership requires both character and competence. This integration of psychology, leadership, and theology proved especially powerful in Week 5's session, "Transforming the Leader Within," in which participants reflected on how their own formation impacts their ability to disciple others.

Every week of the project drew from the intellectual and spiritual synergy developed throughout my studies. The leadership training began with assessment and

awareness, inviting participants to reflect on their current understanding of discipleship and progressed toward equipping, application, and commitment. Activities such as journaling, group discussions, and ministry mapping helped leaders connect abstract ideas with tangible ministry practices. By the end of the seven weeks, participants had developed a clearer theological understanding of discipleship, a renewed sense of mission, and the confidence to take practical steps toward launching a young-adult discipleship ministry at Daniel Chapel.

This project, therefore, stands as both a reflection and a result of my overall doctoral formation. It embodies the integration of academic study and ministerial practice, showing how scholarship can inform and transform local ministry. The research and writing required throughout the program gave me the language, framework, and discipline to approach ministry more intentionally. The training process provided a space for that learning to come alive. Each session reflected the program's emphasis on contextual theology, in which truth is not only studied but also lived out in community.

Ultimately, this project demonstrates that academic formation and spiritual transformation are not separate pursuits but complementary ones. What began as a scholarly question about discipleship evolved into a practical strategy that has reshaped how Daniel Chapel approaches ministry to young adults. The integration of theology, psychology, leadership, and history produced a holistic model of discipleship that honors both tradition and innovation. Through this journey, I have come to see that ministry leadership is not simply about teaching others what to do but about becoming the kind of leader who inspires others to follow Christ more deeply. This project is the fullest

expression of that conviction, a testimony that learning and leadership, when united by faith and mission, can indeed transform both leaders and the church they serve.

Methodology

The purpose of this project was to equip ministry leaders at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church to initiate a young-adult discipleship ministry. The project methodology was intentionally designed to align with the theological, biblical, historical, and interdisciplinary foundations developed throughout the Doctor of Ministry program. Each methodological choice, from participant selection to data collection, was grounded in a commitment to practical theology and transformational leadership. This section describes how the data were gathered, who participated, how the intervention was structured to promote change, and the rationale for choosing this approach.

Data-Gathering Process

To evaluate both the cognitive and affective impact of the project, I employed four primary data-collection methods: pre- and post-training surveys, one-on-one interviews, participant journals, and group discussions. Each method served a specific purpose, providing both quantitative and qualitative insights into how participants' understanding, attitudes, and readiness to disciple young adults evolved. The pre- and post-training surveys established a baseline and measured change over time. Both instruments consisted of five identical open-ended questions designed to capture participants ’initial understanding of discipleship, their perceived strengths and weaknesses, and their readiness to engage young adults. Using the same questions before

and after training enabled identification of shifts in language, theological depth, and confidence. The surveys were distributed electronically to ensure confidentiality, and participants were encouraged to respond honestly, knowing their answers would be reported collectively rather than individually.

The one-on-one interviews provided richer narrative data. Conducted during the final week of the project, each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes and followed a semi-structured format. Questions explored how participants 'views of discipleship had evolved, what aspects of the training were most transformative, and what next steps they envisioned in ministry. These interviews allowed participants to articulate their experiences in their own words and offered me a chance to listen for themes of growth, challenge, and conviction. I recorded brief notes rather than full transcripts to preserve conversational flow while maintaining confidentiality.

The weekly journal prompts functioned as a form of reflective practice. Participants completed one written reflection after each session, responding to prompts such as "What is one new insight you gained about mentoring young adults?" or "What commitment are you making this week to live out what you learned?" These journals captured affective and behavioral change, showing how participants internalized the material and applied it in their spiritual lives. Journaling also reinforced learning by requiring participants to process information through personal reflection rather than passive listening.

The group discussions provided the communal dimension of data gathering. At several points during the seven weeks, participants engaged in structured conversations on topics such as "Why young adult discipleship matters," "What barriers prevent

engagement," and "How we can sustain discipleship long-term." I recorded key phrases and themes in my notes and later condensed them into analytic memos. These conversations revealed collective insights and demonstrated how participants learned not only from the facilitator but also from one another. The combination of individual reflection and group dialogue created a balanced dataset that reflected both personal transformation and corporate learning.

All collected data, e.g., survey responses, journal entries, interview notes, and group summaries, were stored securely. Electronic materials were saved on a password-protected computer accessible only to me. Any physical copies, such as handwritten journals, were kept in a locked cabinet in my church office. After the three-year retention period, digital files will be permanently deleted and physical materials shredded to ensure participant privacy.

Participant Selection

Participants were selected intentionally rather than randomly. Because the project aimed to train ministry leaders, I personally invited individuals who were already serving or who demonstrated leadership potential at Daniel Chapel. This included officers, lay leaders, teachers, and ministry coordinators. I sent each prospective participant a written invitation that described the project's purpose, expectations, and confidentiality procedures. Those who agreed to volunteer completed a consent form and committed to attending the seven sessions.

The decision to use volunteer participants was both practical and theological. In practice, volunteers were more likely to engage deeply and sustain commitment

throughout the training period. Theologically, discipleship itself is a voluntary act; an intentional choice to follow and to grow. Inviting rather than assigning participants mirrored the way Jesus invited His followers. The resulting group represented a diverse cross-section of Daniel Chapel's leadership, men and women of varying ages, experience levels, and ministry backgrounds. This diversity enriched the conversation, bringing multiple perspectives to the shared challenge of reaching and discipling young adults.

I also established reasonable exclusion criteria. Individuals unable to commit to all sessions, or those currently experiencing emotional or physical conditions that might make reflective participation difficult, were encouraged to defer involvement until a later opportunity. This ensured that each participant could engage the material thoroughly and without undue stress. By keeping the group small with ten participants, I was able to foster meaningful discussion, provide individualized attention, and maintain a safe and trusting environment.

Intervention Design and Implementation

The project sought to create transformational change in both thought and practice. To accomplish this, I designed and facilitated a seven-week workshop series built around progressive learning objectives. Each week, combined teaching, discussion, and reflection allow participants to integrate biblical, theological, historical, and practical insights into their own leadership. The workshop titles and emphases are listed below.

Week One

Orientation and Assessment*:* Introducing the problem and completing pre-surveys.

Week Two

Understanding Young Adults in the Church*:* Exploring generational dynamics and engagement barriers.

Week Three

Discipleship in Historical Perspective*:* Learning from John Wesley's model of class and band meetings.

Week Four

Called, Connected, Commissioned*:* Examining Jesus 'discipleship method in Mark 3:13–19.

Week Five

Transforming the Leader Within*:* Applying Transformational Leadership principles.

Week Six

Discipleship in Action*:* Developing ministry plans and accountability structures.

Week Seven

Commitment and Commissioning*:* Sharing post-surveys, interviews, and ministry commitments.

Each session lasted approximately ninety to 120 minutes and included prayer, teaching content, interactive activities, and a reflection period. The rhythm of "learn,

discuss, apply" facilitated the transfer of information from the cognitive to the behavioral level. Participants were not passive recipients but co-learners who shaped the process through their insights and experiences. My role as facilitator was to guide conversation, pose critical questions, and model vulnerability, inviting others to wrestle honestly with their own call to disciple young adults.

The project's structure was designed to effect change through three intentional movements: awareness, formation, and action. Awareness was fostered through teaching and assessment, helping participants identify the problem and understand the biblical and cultural context of young adult discipleship. Formation occurred through journaling, mentoring conversations, and theological reflection, during which participants re-examined their assumptions and deepened their self-awareness. Action developed in the final weeks as participants crafted ministry plans and made commitments to disciple specific individuals or groups within the church. This process mirrored the discipleship pattern found in scripture: Jesus first taught, then modeled, and finally commissioned His followers to go and do likewise.

Rationale for the Chosen Method

I chose this project design because it honors the integrative nature of ministry transformation. Fundamental change rarely happens through information alone. It requires experience, reflection, and community. The combination of teaching and dialogue provided the intellectual foundation; journaling and interviews engaged the heart; and group discussion fostered mutual accountability. By blending these methods,

the project addressed the whole person: mind, emotion, and will by reflecting a holistic approach to discipleship.

Conducting the project as a seven-week workshop also fit the rhythm and reality of congregational life. It allowed lay leaders to participate without disrupting their ongoing responsibilities and provided time between sessions for personal application. The weekly spacing enabled incremental growth rather than emotional intensity without follow-through. Furthermore, leading the sessions myself ensured continuity and authenticity; as a pastor, I could connect theological content directly to the church's vision and challenges.

This method also reflects the conviction that transformation begins with leaders. If ministry leaders experience renewal in their own discipleship, they will reproduce that transformation in others. The seven-week journey was not only educational but formational, inviting participants to rediscover their sense of call and mission. In many ways, the project became a microcosm of the very discipleship it sought to promote; relational, reflective, and mission-driven.

Finally, I chose this method because it embodies the Wesleyan spirit of connection and accountability while integrating modern leadership insights. The structured yet relational design echoed John Wesley's class-meeting approach, while the focus on empowerment and self-awareness drew from Transformational Leadership Theory. Together, these influences created a framework where faith and leadership development could flourish side by side.

The methodology of this project reflects my conviction that meaningful change in ministry must be both spiritual and strategic. Through carefully chosen participants,

multiple avenues of reflection, and an intentional progression of learning, the project sought not merely to transfer knowledge but to cultivate transformation. The process honored both the academic rigor of the doctoral program and the pastoral realities of local church leadership. By engaging the head, heart, and hands, the methodology ensured that discipleship moved beyond theory to lived experience, shaping leaders who are now equipped to make and multiply disciples among young adults at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church.

Implementation

The implementation of this project was both the practical and spiritual culmination of the work completed throughout the Doctor of Ministry program. It represented the transition from theory to lived ministry, an opportunity to apply the biblical, theological, historical, and interdisciplinary foundations within a real context. The implementation took place at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church in Phoenix, Illinois, and unfolded over seven weeks of structured leadership training sessions. These workshops were designed to equip ministry leaders with the knowledge, tools, and spiritual confidence to disciple young adults within the congregation.

A total of nine ministry leaders participated in the project. Their ages ranged from twenty-six to fifty-eight, representing multiple generations within the church's life. Among the participants, seven were women, and three were men. All were active members of Daniel Chapel and served in various ministries, including Christian Education, the Trustee Board, the Steward Board, the Choir, and the Usher Board. Educational backgrounds varied: three participants held college degrees, five had

completed some college or trade certifications, and two had high school diplomas. While their educational levels differed, all shared a strong commitment to the spiritual health of the congregation and a genuine desire to see young adults re-engaged in ministry.

Participants were selected intentionally rather than randomly. I personally invited them based on their current leadership roles and their openness to new ministry approaches. Participation was entirely voluntary; everyone received a written invitation describing the project's purpose and expectations, followed by an informed consent form explaining confidentiality, data collection, and withdrawal rights. Those who agreed returned signed forms electronically or in person before the first session.

The diversity of participants across age, gender, and ministry function proved invaluable to the project. Older participants brought wisdom and perspective from years of church service, while younger leaders contributed cultural awareness and practical insight into their peers' needs. This mix enabled richer dialogue and made the training environment a microcosm of the intergenerational body of Christ. Because confidentiality was a priority, no participants are identified by name in this report. Their contributions are referenced in generalized, collective terms to protect privacy.

Ethical Considerations and IRB Compliance

Before the project's implementation, all procedures were reviewed for compliance with the Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements established by United Theological Seminary. Ethical approval was sought and granted based on the project's design, which involved minimal risk to participants. The nature of the study, which was

leadership training within a church context, focused on professional and spiritual development rather than sensitive personal topics.

Participants were informed of their rights during the consent process. They were told participation was voluntary, that they could withdraw at any time, and that no identifying information would be used in reports or publications. All written data (surveys, journals, and notes) were securely stored on a password-protected computer and /or in a locked cabinet in my church office. Data will be retained for three years before being permanently destroyed.

No context or professional associates participated in data gathering, analysis, or teaching. I, as the pastor and principal investigator, served as the sole facilitator for every session. This approach ensured consistency in delivery, confidentiality in data handling, and continuity of theological perspective. No outside facilitators, teachers, or assistants distributed or collected materials; all tasks related to administration, facilitation, and data collection were managed personally. This self-contained design preserved the integrity of the research process and prevented external influence over the participants 'responses. It also enabled me to evaluate the project's impact from both pastoral and pedagogical perspectives, using direct observation, reflection, and data analysis.

Workshop Structure and Implementation

The project unfolded through seven weekly workshops, each lasting approximately 90–120 minutes. The sessions combined teaching, discussion, reflection, and practical exercises. Each week is intentionally built on the previous one, progressing from awareness to empowerment and culminating in a final commitment to ministerial

action. Below is a summary of each workshop, including lesson objectives, structure, content highlights, and analysis of outcomes.

Week One – Orientation and Assessment: "Setting the Foundation"

The objective was to introduce the problem, clarify the project's purpose, and establish expectations for participation. Each lesson included:

Opening prayer and scripture reading (Isaiah 6:8)

Discussion: What does discipleship mean to you?

Overview of project goals and schedule

Completion of pre-training survey

Icebreaker: "Ministry Moments That Shaped Us"

Reflection: What are your fears or hopes about discipling young adults?

Analysis

Participants quickly identified the need for young-adult discipleship; several expressed uncertainty about how to engage this group effectively. The discussion revealed both a desire for change and a lack of clear models to guide it. The pre-surveys reflected a range of understanding; some equated discipleship with attendance, while others linked it to mentorship or spiritual accountability. This first session established a sense of community and ownership among the participants.

Week Two – Understanding Young Adults in the Church: "Bridging the Gap"

The objective was to explore the unique social, spiritual, and developmental challenges facing young adults today and to identify barriers to engagement. The lesson plan is as follows:

Review of Week 1 reflections

Teaching: "Who Are Our Young Adults?"

Presentation: Fowler's Stages of Faith and Erikson's Psychosocial Development

Group Discussion: Why do young adults disconnect from church?

Journal Prompt: Reflect on a time you felt spiritually disconnected.

Analysis

This session was one of the most engaging. Participants recognized that many young adults struggle with belonging, authenticity, and relevance in church spaces. The inclusion of developmental theories helped demystify young adult behavior and reduced judgmental attitudes. Many participants admitted they had misinterpreted young adults' disengagement as rebellion rather than as a search. The session sparked empathy and laid the groundwork for relational ministry strategies.

Week Three – Discipleship in Historical Perspective: "Learning from Wesley's Model"

The objective was to learn from John Wesley's class and band meetings as models for relational discipleship and accountability. The lesson plan is as follows:

Teaching: Wesley's methodical structure for growth

Discussion: How can class meetings inform our church today?

Activity: Compare early Methodist groups with current ministry structures

Reflection: What would it look like to "watch over one another in love?"

Analysis

This session produced an "aha" moment for participants. Many had not realized the depth of organization in early Methodism. They saw how Wesley's emphasis on small groups, mutual care, and lay empowerment mirrored what Daniel Chapel lacked. One participant remarked, "We don't have a discipleship problem; we have a relationship problem." The group began brainstorming how to create smaller, more intentional gatherings for young adults.

Week Four – The Biblical Model: "Called, Connected, Commissioned"

The objective was to examine Jesus 'pattern of calling, forming, and sending disciples as a template for ministry. The lesson plan is as follows:

Scripture: Mark 3:13–19

Teaching: Jesus' threefold pattern of discipleship

Activity: Draw your "Disciple Map: Who's on Your Mountain?"

Group Discussion: How can we apply Jesus 'model to our ministry?

Journal Reflection: Which movement, calling, connecting, or commissioning, do you need to grow in most?

Analysis

This was a profoundly spiritual session. Participants reflected on how Jesus was both intentional and relational. They realized discipleship must begin with invitation and must always lead to mission. The "Disciple Map" exercise revealed that most leaders were not actively mentoring anyone. Many expressed a renewed sense of responsibility to identify and disciple younger believers.

Week Five – Interdisciplinary Insights: "Transforming the Leader Within"

The objective was to integrate psychological and leadership principles into spiritual formation, drawing from Transformational Leadership Theory. The lesson plan is as follows:

Review: How have you seen your thinking change so far?

Teaching: Four pillars of transformational leadership

Activity: Leadership self-assessment and group discussion

Case Study: A young adult feeling overlooked in church: how would you respond?

Journal Prompt: What kind of leader is God shaping you to become?

Analysis

This session effectively blended theology and psychology. Participants discovered how empathy, integrity, and vision directly influence discipleship outcomes. They learned that transformation begins internally before it can extend to others. Several participants shared stories about how their tone, patience, and mentoring approach had

already started to change. The conversation moved from theoretical to personal, revealing tangible growth in leadership awareness.

Week Six – Discipleship in Action: "From Vision to Practice"

The objective was to help participants develop practical plans for implementing young adult discipleship. The lesson plan is as follows:

Teaching: Developing a ministry plan (vision, goals, structure)

Group Activity: Draft a six-month discipleship plan

Peer Feedback: Share and refine plans

Discussion: How will we evaluate success?

Analysis

This week marked a transition from formation to mission. Participants presented creative ideas, including mentoring circles, service projects, and "Faith & Life" discussions. Many included accountability structures inspired by Wesley's model. The energy in the room reflected a collective sense of possibility. Leaders began to see themselves as part of a team with shared responsibility for young adult discipleship.

Week Seven – Commitment and Commissioning: "Carrying the Mission Forward"

The objective was to evaluate learning outcomes, celebrate growth, and commit to next steps. The lesson plan is as follows:

Opening prayer and reflection on the journey

Completion of post-surveys and one-on-one interviews

Sharing commitments: “My Next Step in Discipleship”

Devotional closing and commissioning prayer

Analysis

The final session was emotional and affirming. Participants expressed gratitude for the process, noting both personal and spiritual growth. The post-survey results revealed significant improvement in understanding and confidence. Several leaders identified specific young adults they planned to mentor. The closing prayer of commissioning symbolized a new beginning for Daniel Chapel’s ministry to young adults.

Overall Implementation Analysis

Across the seven weeks, clear patterns of transformation emerged. Cognitively, participants developed a richer theological and practical understanding of discipleship. Affective changes were equally evident because leaders expressed increased compassion for young adults, greater confidence in their leadership, and a renewed sense of calling. The group moved from uncertainty and frustration to clarity and motivation.

The project also strengthened the community within the leadership team. As participants reflected and shared vulnerably, trust deepened. Many reported that the sessions helped them reconnect with their own faith journeys. One participant wrote, “This training reminded me that discipleship starts with being a disciple myself.”

Quantitatively, the post-survey responses showed marked improvement in key areas: understanding of discipleship, perceived readiness to mentor, and willingness to

engage young adults. Qualitatively, journal reflections revealed recurring themes of growth, humility, and hope.

Summary of Learning

The results of this project demonstrate measurable cognitive, affective, and behavioral growth among participants who completed the seven-week leadership training in young adult discipleship. Through pre- and post-assessments, interviews, journal reflections, and group discussions, participants demonstrated a clearer theological understanding, greater personal confidence, and stronger missional motivation to disciple young adults at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church. This section summarizes what participants learned, the key data collected, and the analysis of how those results support the project's hypothesis.

What Participants Learned

The training was designed to produce three specific types of change: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Cognitive change reflects growth in knowledge and understanding of what it means to disciple young adults. Affective change reflects shifts in attitude, empathy, and motivation toward young adult ministry. Behavioral change reflects readiness and commitment to implement discipleship strategies within the church. Across these dimensions, the data consistently revealed progress.

Increased Theological Understanding

Before the training, most participants described discipleship in vague or programmatic terms, often equating it with church attendance or general mentorship. After the sessions, participants demonstrated a more biblical and relational understanding of discipleship. Many articulated discipleship as "walking alongside someone in faith," or "helping others grow through intentional relationship." This cognitive shift reflected the influence of the biblical model (Mk. 3:13–19) and the theological foundation rooted in Missio Dei.

Greater Awareness of Young Adult Needs

Through discussions and developmental theory sessions (Week Two), participants learned to identify generational factors influencing young adult engagement. They began to see that many young adults struggle with belonging and authenticity rather than disbelief. This led to a change in perception from frustration to compassion. Participants reported that they now view young adults as partners in ministry rather than passive recipients of programming.

Personal Transformation and Leadership Confidence

Participants also reported personal growth. The Transformational Leadership sessions (Week Five) encouraged self-reflection, resulting in greater emotional intelligence and ministry confidence. Journal reflections indicated that several participants began mentoring younger church members by Week Six, demonstrating immediate behavioral change.

Commitment to Ongoing Discipleship Efforts

In the final session, all participants made personal commitments to continue developing young adult discipleship. Some committed to starting small group discussions; others volunteered to mentor or lead new ministry initiatives. These commitments provided tangible evidence that the project's hypothesis, training leaders would equip them to begin creating a discipleship ministry, was being realized.

Presentation of Data

The following data were drawn from pre- and post-survey responses, journal reflections, and interviews. Only the most relevant data are presented here to illustrate key patterns of learning and transformation.

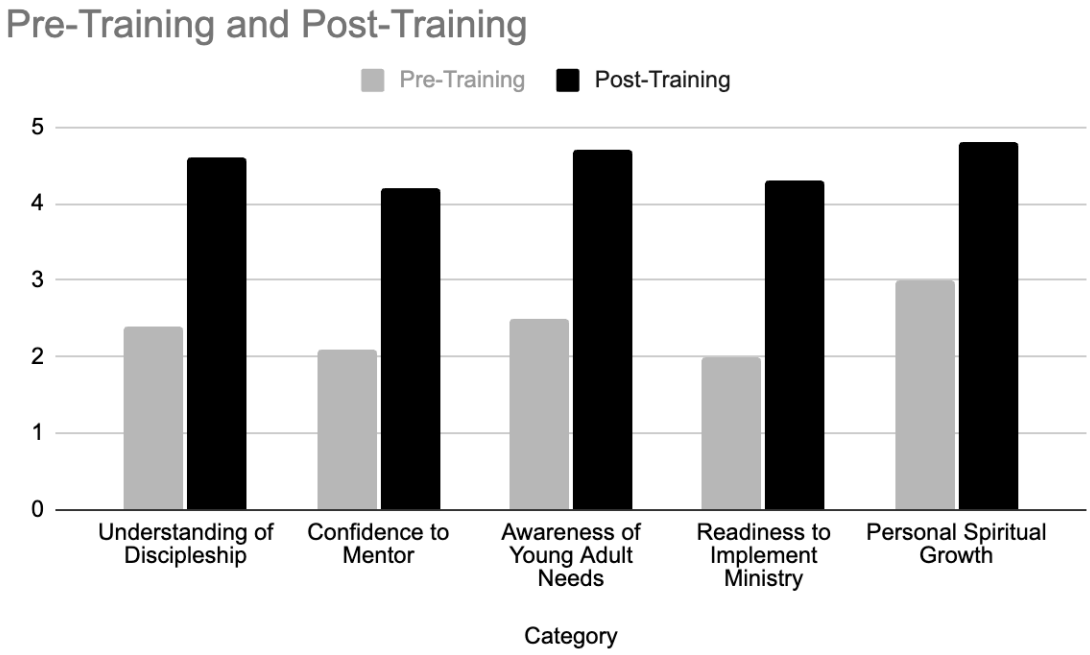
Table One – Comparison of Pre- and Post-Survey Themes

Survey Question	Pre-Training Responses (Summary Themes)	Post-Training Responses (Summary Themes)
1. How would you describe discipleship?	Attendance, teaching, or membership	Relationship, growth, mentoring, modeling Christ
2. What are the spiritual needs of young adults?	Unclear; "they need to come back to church"	Identity, belonging, guidance, authenticity
3. What experience do you have discipling others?	Limited; "I haven't done much"	Emerging confidence; "I have started mentoring one person"
4. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a leader?	Focused on tasks or position	Greater self-awareness; emphasis on empathy and listening
5. What are your goals for discipling young adults?	Unformed or general	Concrete goals and ministry ideas (small groups, mentoring, outreach)

The table illustrates growth from conceptual ambiguity to clarity, from passive observation to active engagement. The most significant shifts occurred in participants' understanding of discipleship (Question One) and awareness of young adult needs (Question Two).

Graph One – Overall Growth in Discipleship Confidence

A simple 5-point Likert-style comparison (1 = low confidence; 5 = high confidence) revealed steady improvement.



Interpretation

Participants showed the most significant gains in understanding and awareness, indicating that teaching and reflection activities effectively addressed knowledge and

perception barriers. The growth in "readiness to implement" (from 2.0 to 4.3) confirms behavioral activation consistent with the project's objectives.

Table Two – Journal Reflection Themes (Weeks One through Seven)

Week	Prompt Summary	Emergent Themes
1. Fears/uncertainties	Fear of failure; lack of knowledge	Desire to learn; openness to change
2. Spiritual disconnection	Personal stories of isolation	Increased empathy for young adults
3. Leadership qualities	Desire for patience and humility	Recognition of growth areas
4. Insights about mentoring	"It's about walking with people"	Shift from task to relationship
5. Challenges in training	Balancing ministry and reflection	Perseverance, ownership
6. Balancing discipleship	Time management and prioritization	Reframing ministry as daily life
7. Commitments for future	Mentoring, starting groups	Long-term ownership and sustainability

The progression across journal entries shows deepening self-awareness and theological reflection. Participants consistently moved from introspection to outward action.

Analysis of the Data

Evidence of Cognitive Change

The comparison between pre- and post-surveys demonstrates a clear cognitive shift. Initially, most participants associated discipleship with programs or membership

retention. After the training, participants articulated a more nuanced and biblical understanding rooted in relationship, accountability, and mission. They began using language consistent with theological concepts explored in the training, such as "intentional relationships," "spiritual growth," and "Christ-like modeling." This indicates not only knowledge acquisition but also internalization of core concepts.

Evidence of Affective Change

The most striking affective change emerged from participants 'attitudes toward young adults. Early comments revealed frustration or confusion, such as, "They just don't come to church anymore." By the end, that tone changed dramatically, such as, "We have to meet them where they are." Participants demonstrated compassion, humility, and empathy. Their journal reflections demonstrated a deeper awareness of the emotional and social realities shaping young adults' faith journeys. This affective shift was essential to the project's goal because effective discipleship must be motivated by love rather than obligation.

Evidence of Behavioral Change

Behavioral change was most visible in participants 'ministry plans and commitments. During Week Six, each participant drafted a personal discipleship plan identifying at least one young adult to mentor. Several began implementing these plans before the training concluded. One leader began hosting informal "coffee conversations" with younger members, while another committed to launching a small discussion

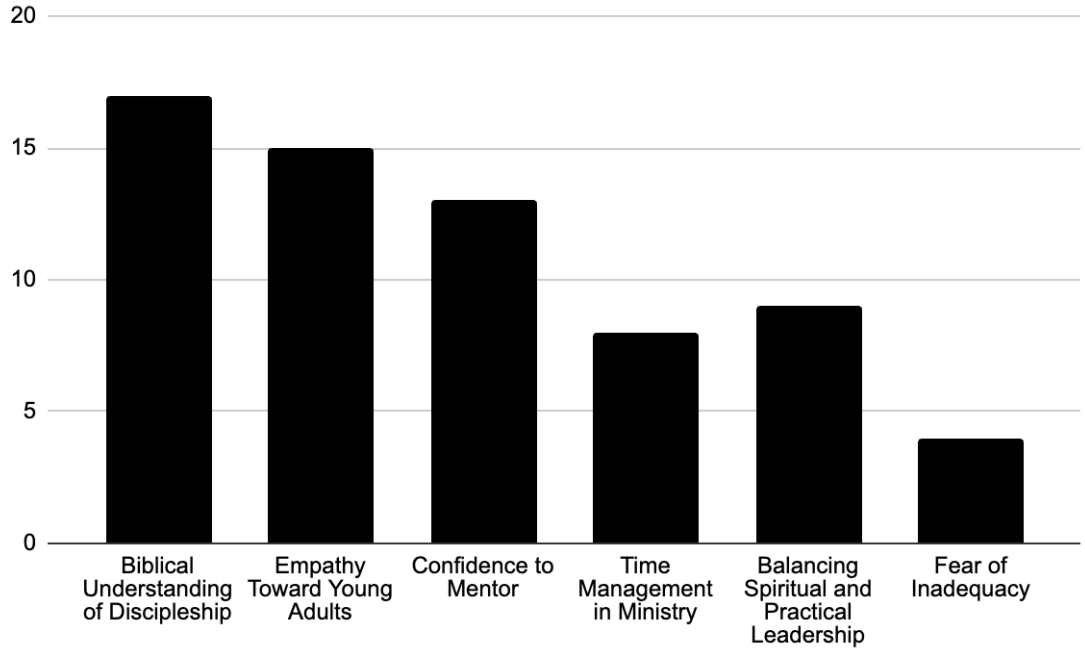
group in the new year. These actions show that learning translated into ministry behavior, supporting the project's hypothesis that training would equip leaders for practical implementation.

Summary of Interview Data

Interviews conducted after the final session provided qualitative confirmation of the numerical trends. Participants emphasized the spiritual and relational impact of the process. Common responses included: "I understand now that discipleship is a lifestyle, not a program." "I feel more confident mentoring others because I've been mentored through this process." "We need to build relationships with young adults before expecting them to serve."

Interview responses revealed recurring themes of personal empowerment, renewed spiritual energy, and collective vision. No participants reported feeling overwhelmed or unprepared; instead, they described a sense of ownership and optimism. The interview data corroborated the overall positive growth trajectory observed in survey and journal findings.

Graph Two – Major Learning Domains by Frequency of Reflection



The most frequent and intense reflections centered around understanding discipleship biblically and developing empathy. The decline in “fear of inadequacy” from early to late sessions illustrates affective and psychological progress. The correlation between methods and results is that each data collection method revealed complementary insights that, when triangulated, confirmed holistic transformation.

Data Source	Focus	Findings	Type of Change
Pre/Post Surveys	Knowledge & readiness	Shift from uncertainty to confidence	Cognitive/Behavioral
Journals	Personal reflection	Greater empathy and commitment	Affective
Interviews	Experience & perception	Internalized mission mindset	Cognitive/Affective
Group Discussions	Collective learning	Increased collaboration and shared language	Relational

The convergence of these sources demonstrates internal consistency. Growth was not isolated to intellectual understanding but extended to emotional conviction and practical application, which are the core goals of transformational leadership and discipleship.

The date is relevant. These results are significant because they reveal that intentional, structured leadership training can transform how ministry leaders perceive and practice discipleship. The shifts in knowledge and attitude are not superficial. They reflect a deep internal change consistent with spiritual formation. In the language of Transformational Leadership, participants moved from being transactional leaders focused on tasks to transformational leaders who concentrate on relationships, purpose, and growth.

The project not only increased participant competence but also reshaped church culture. As leaders began mentoring and planning together, discipleship became a shared mission rather than a departmental responsibility. This cultural shift aligns with the

Wesleyan principle of connection and the biblical model of equipping the saints for the work of ministry.

As the facilitator, I learned that fundamental transformation requires both structure and space. The carefully planned sequence of workshops created a framework for growth, but the breakthroughs happened during open conversations and journal reflections. I discovered that participants needed time to wrestle with new ideas, to confess frustrations, and to rediscover their own sense of calling. Teaching alone was insufficient; transformation occurred through dialogue, vulnerability, and community. I also learned that leadership development and discipleship are inseparable. Many leaders had previously seen their roles as administrative or organizational, not formational. As they learned to lead with empathy and intentionality, they discovered that leadership itself can be an act of discipleship. This realization deepened my conviction that training leaders is the most effective way to create lasting discipleship impact.

Hypothesis Evaluation

The hypothesis for this project is if ministry leaders participate in a training about discipling young adults, then they will be equipped to begin creating a young adults ministry designed to disciple these individuals. The data support this hypothesis. Cognitively, participants demonstrated greater understanding of discipleship principles and strategies for engaging young adults. They effectively demonstrated greater compassion, confidence, and motivation to disciple others. Behaviorally, they began implementing concrete plans for mentoring and small group ministry. The combination of qualitative and quantitative evidence confirms that the training effectively equipped

leaders to begin creating the foundation for a young adult discipleship ministry. While long-term sustainability will depend on continued support and accountability, the project successfully initiated measurable transformation consistent with its stated goal.

Conclusion

The completion of this seven-week discipleship training project at Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church has offered a profound opportunity to witness what happens when intentional preparation, biblical grounding, and spiritual formation intersect in the life of a ministry. The project's goal, which was to equip ministry leaders with the understanding, confidence, and readiness to begin discipling young adults, proved both timely and transformative. Across sessions, surveys, interviews, and journal reflections, participants demonstrated measurable growth not only in their understanding of discipleship but also in their ability to embody it as a lived practice. The outcomes of this project reflect the power of focused leadership development within faith formation and serve as an invitation to continued missional engagement in the life of the local church.

How Well the Project Worked

In evaluating the project's success, several dimensions indicate that the initiative was highly effective in achieving its intended outcomes. The pre- and post-training surveys revealed significant growth in five key areas: understanding of discipleship, confidence in mentoring, awareness of young adult needs, readiness to implement ministry, and personal spiritual growth. The most dramatic increases were found in preparedness and understanding, suggesting that the training not only deepened

participants ’intellectual comprehension but also inspired concrete action steps toward launching a young adult ministry.

Qualitative responses reinforced these numerical findings. Participants frequently described the experience as “eye-opening,” “spiritually renewing,” and “challenging in all the right ways.” One leader noted, “This training helped me see discipleship not as a church program but as a relationship rooted in accountability and care.” Such statements point to cognitive, affective, and behavioral transformation, which is the kind of holistic development this project was designed to produce.

What Went Well

Several aspects of the project worked exceptionally well. First, the structure of the sessions, which balanced teaching, group discussion, and reflective journaling, created space for deep engagement. Participants repeatedly noted that the combination of biblical teaching and personal application helped them internalize principles rather than merely memorize concepts. The use of scripture, especially the biblical model from Mark 3:13–19, allowed participants to see how Jesus modeled leadership development long before the term “discipleship strategy” existed.

Second, the integration of interdisciplinary insights from theology, history, psychology, and leadership theory made the training accessible and relevant. By connecting biblical truth with modern frameworks like Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development and Fowler’s stages of faith, participants could better understand how young adults grow, struggle, and seek meaning. This balance of spiritual

and developmental theory grounded the learning experience in both head and heart transformation.

Third, the use of reflection journals proved to be one of the most impactful tools. The weekly prompts helped participants process their emotional responses and spiritual growth, leading to transparency, self-awareness, and transformation. Many participants wrote about rediscovering their call to ministry or regaining a sense of purpose in serving young adults.

Lastly, the community dynamic fostered by the training strengthened relationships among ministry leaders. Participants reported feeling seen, supported, and spiritually challenged by their peers, laying the foundation for future collaborative ministry. What began as a structured training evolved into a spiritual community that modeled the very discipleship they were learning to cultivate.

What Went Less Well

While the project achieved most of its goals, several challenges emerged that provide important lessons for future iterations. The most consistent issue was time management. Despite the sessions being scheduled for two hours, discussion and engagement often extended well beyond that time. Participants were deeply invested, and conversations frequently continued informally after the official close of each session. While this enthusiasm was encouraging, it also indicated that future training could benefit from longer sessions or a more focused agenda in each meeting to achieve more balanced pacing.

Another limitation was participant availability. Although all volunteers were committed to the full seven-week period, life circumstances occasionally interfered, resulting in missed sessions. While the makeup materials were provided, the richness of the group discussion could not be fully captured in writing. This suggests the need for built-in flexibility, through recorded sessions or hybrid participation options, to ensure consistent engagement.

A third challenge involved the depth of initial understanding among some participants. At the beginning of the training, several leaders expressed uncertainty about what discipleship truly entailed, equating it primarily with teaching or programmatic ministry. It took several weeks of intentional re-framing to help participants move from an activity-based model to a relational one. Although this shift occurred, future sessions may benefit from a brief pre-orientation that introduces core concepts before Week One.

Finally, technological limitations occasionally created barriers during the Zoom-based sessions, including minor audio disruptions and varying levels of digital literacy among participants. While these challenges were resolved, they highlight the need for clear digital guidelines and early technical support when implementing online ministry training.

What Would Be Changed in the Future

If this project were to be implemented again, several refinements would enhance its overall effectiveness. Extending the timeline from seven to eight or nine weeks could provide additional time for reflection, application, and content integration. Many

participants expressed a desire for more time to explore the final session on ministry design and to develop actionable plans for young adult engagement.

Second, future iterations could include a mentorship component pairing participants with experienced leaders who have successfully implemented discipleship models in their own contexts. This ongoing mentorship could provide sustained accountability beyond the training and help bridge the gap between learning and long-term practice. Third, incorporating real-time ministry experiments, such as leading a small discipleship group or planning a young adult service project during training, could further strengthen practical application. This would allow participants to immediately test and reflect upon the methods they are learning, deepening both confidence and competence. Finally, future projects could include a six-month post-program evaluation to measure long-term outcomes and sustainability. Such follow-up would not only assess the ongoing impact of the training but also reinforce leaders' commitment to ongoing discipleship within the church.

Impact on Participants and the Wider Context

The personal and communal impact of this project was significant. Participants consistently reported greater clarity about their role as disciple-makers and a renewed passion for serving young adults. Many shared that their attitudes toward ministry shifted from frustration to hopefulness. One leader reflected, “I used to think young adults just didn’t care about church. Now I realize we weren’t speaking their language or meeting them where they are.”

The training also influenced the culture of Daniel Chapel as a whole. Conversations about discipleship have become more frequent in leadership meetings, and there is growing momentum to form a dedicated Young Adult Discipleship Ministry. The project not only equipped individual leaders but also sparked institutional awareness that discipleship must be intentional, relational, and mission-driven.

Additionally, the project fostered intergenerational empathy within the church. Older leaders began to see young adults not as disconnected from tradition but as potential bridge builders between heritage and innovation. This relational shift represents a quiet but powerful cultural transformation and a hallmark of effective discipleship.

Future Direction and Dreams for the Ministry

Looking ahead, the dream is for Daniel Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church to become a hub for young adult discipleship and leadership development within the denomination. The goal is not merely to sustain a program but to cultivate a movement and a culture of discipleship that multiplies leaders and transforms lives. Plans are already underway to formalize the training into a biannual leadership development series, integrating feedback from this initial cohort. The goal is to open the training to nearby congregations within the district eventually, positioning Daniel Chapel as a resource center for young adult engagement and ministry innovation. The long-term vision is to create a discipleship pipeline that moves individuals from new believer to mature leader through intentional mentorship, theological education, and missional service. This approach aligns with the Wesleyan model of holistic formation, ensuring that discipleship remains both profoundly spiritual and socially engaged.

Next Steps: Replication and Publication

Given the project's success, there is strong motivation to replicate it. The next cycle will likely include both returning participants (to serve as peer mentors) and new leaders seeking to grow in this area. Each iteration will build on prior insights, gradually strengthening the church's discipleship culture. In terms of scholarship, the results of this project merit broader dissemination. A condensed version of this research and implementation plan will be submitted for publication in a denominational journal or presented at a ministry leadership conference. Sharing the findings would not only contribute to the wider body of practical theology but also inspire other congregations to adopt similar discipleship initiatives.

Final Reflection

This project reaffirmed a central truth: discipleship is not a program, but a process of transformation rooted in relationship, reflection, and responsibility. It begins when leaders are willing to be shaped themselves before seeking to shape others. The journey of equipping ministry leaders at Daniel Chapel demonstrated that with prayerful intention, theological depth, and practical tools, the church can indeed reclaim its mission to make disciples in every generation. While this seven-week training represented one small step, it marked the beginning of a much larger movement toward authentic, sustainable, and Spirit-led discipleship that empowers the next generation to lead with faith, compassion, and conviction.

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